To my father and mother

Şükrü and Ayşe Yaslıçimen

SUNNISM VERSUS SHI'ISM?
RISE OF THE SHI'I POLITICS AND OF THE OTTOMAN APPREHENSION IN LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY IRAQ

The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences
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by

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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in

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ABSTRACT

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RISE OF THE SHI'I POLITICS AND OF THE OTTOMAN APPREHENSION

IN LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY IRAQ

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The resurgence of religious political activism had predominantly been one of the foremost themes of structural transformations among societies during the nineteenth century. The major characteristic regarding the history of religion in the Middle Eastern context was a bilateral process, that of the mobilization of society and of the consolidation of organized social movements followed by a subsequent process of politicization. As for the Iraqi region, the influence of Shi'ism increased over certain segments of society thus "the spread of Shi'ism" primarily meant the increased activity and organization of Shi'i communities, which increased their weight in political spectrum rather than the magnitude of "the spread" itself.

There were internal and external reasons for the rise of Shi'i politics. On the one hand, the intensifying governmental cohesion over the very segments of society during the process of centralization deeply influenced the existing social structure through dislocating various populations and many large tribal confederations. On the

other hand, the rise of Usulism at the expense of the Akhbari interpretation of the Shi'i jurisprudence generated an innovative tendency, stimulating the Shi'i scholars to understand and interpret the worldly affairs in a different manner. It gave an impetus and a peculiar function to the position of Shi'i clerical notables, particularly the mujtahids, consolidating their authority in social as well as political matters.

The growing influence of Shi'ism in the Iraqi region gave rise to Ottoman apprehension. As a common theme in the Ottoman official documentation, a strong emphasis was made upon the seriousness and urgency of "the spread of Shi'ism." Ottoman officials embraced a policy of educational counter-propaganda to deal with the Shi'i Question. The major strategy, which they utilized, was not the use of forceful measures but the promotion of Sunni education through opening medreses and sending Sunni ulema to the Iraqi region. However, indoctrinating Sunnism at the expense of Shi'ism had much to do with the political unity and the social integrity of the empire rather than the pure religious motivation.

This study further examines selected aspects of the social relations between Shi'is and Sunnis of Iraq in the late nineteenth century. However, the strong emphasis is made upon the relations between the Iraqi Shi'is and the Sunni Ottoman government drawing some conclusions on the antagonistic relations between governmental authorities and certain segments of Shi'i masses. This study also discusses a two-dimensional view developed by the Ottoman officials regarding Shi'ism and the Shi'is of Iraq, perceiving the former as a theological deviation from the "true" path of Islam and recognizing the latter as being similar to those of other local figures who made up the Iraqi society.

Key words: Abdülhamid II, Shi'ism, Sunnism, Iraq, Iran, Ottoman, Mujtahid.

ÖZET

ŞİİLİĞE KARŞI SÜNNİLİK Mİ?

GEÇ 19. YÜZYIL IRAK'TA Şİİ SİYASETİNİN YÜKSELİŞİ

VE ARTAN OSMANLI ENDİŞESİ

Yaslıçimen, Faruk

Yüksek Lisans, Tarih Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Assist. Prof. Oktay Özel

Temmuz 2008

19. yüzyılda meydana gelen toplumsal dönüşümlerin önde gelen temalarından biri, din merkezli modern siyasi söylem ve eylemlerin yükselişi olmuştur. Genel itibariyle toplumsal mobilizasyon ve örgütlü hareketlerin tekamülünü, siyasallaşma süreçleri izlemiştir. Irak örneğinde ise Şiiliğin toplumun çeşitli katmanları üzerinde giderek artan nüfuzu, bu yapısal dönüşüm sürecinin bir parçasını teşkil etmektedir. Gerek döneme ilişkin tarih yazımı gerekse siyasi tartışmalarda bahsi geçen "Şiiliğin yükselişi" söylemi Şiiliğin fiili yayılışından ziyade böyle bir yapısal dönüşüm sürecine tekabül etmektedir. Başka bir ifadeyle, saygın Şii Müçtehidler etrafında kenetlenen Iraklı Şiiler artık siyasal alanda kayda değer bir ağırlık kazanmışlardır.

Irak'ta Şii siyasetinin yükleşinin ardında yatan, yukarıda bahsettiğimiz konjektürel sebeble birlikte, iki temel sebep daha vardır. Bunlardan birincisi, Osmanlı imparatorluğunun merkezileşme çabaları kapsamında yürütülen iskan faaliyetlerinin toplumsal yapıda meydana getirdiği dalgalanmaların bıraktığı derin

tersirlerdir. Diğeri ise, Şii hukukunda meydana gelen bir dönüşüm olan Usuliliğin Ahbariliğe karşı kazandığı zaferi takiben *müçtehidlik* kurumunun tebarüz etmesidir. Zira böylelikle Şiilerin siyasete olan yaklaşımları değişmiş ve dünyevi meselere zamanla daha fazla müdahil olmaya başlamışlardır.

Şii Müçtehidlerin Irak toplumu ve bölgesel siyaset üzerinde giderek artan etkisi, Osmanlı idarecilerinin bölgedeki devlet otoritesinin bekası konusunda ciddi kaygılar taşımalarına sebebiyet vermiştir. İdarecilerin saplantı derecesine varan kaygıları devletin resmi yazışmalarında açıkça görülebilmektedir. Buna müteakip, devlet yetkilileri gerekli tedbirlerin alınması konusunda fikir birliğine varmış ve gerek konjektürel gerekse dini hassasiyetlerin tesiriyle Şii ulemaya karşı fiili güç kullanımdan ziyade Sünni eğitim faaliyetlerinin yoğunlaştırılmasına karar vermişlerdir. Ne var ki, bölegede Sünniliğin güçlendirilmesi salt dini bir mesele olmaktan çok siyasi bir zaruret olarak telakki edilmiştir.

Bu çalışmanın ilerleyen bölümlerinde geç 19. yüzyılda Irak'ta yaşayan Şii ve Sünniler arasında cereyan eden bazı toplumsal ilişki örnekleri de irdelenmektedir. Tarih yazımında iddia edildiğinin aksine, Irak'lı Şiiler ve Sünniler arasında toplumsal alanda bir takım sıkıntılar olmakla birlikte ciddi bir çatışma yoktur. Zira husumetvari meseleler çoğunlukla Osmanlı tebası olmayan Şiiler ve Osmanlı hükümet memurları arasında yaşanmaktadır. Bunlarla birlikte bu çalışmanın son bölümü, hayli karmaşık bir ilişkiler ağını da çözümlemeye teşebbüs eder ve özellikle Osmanlı idarecilerinin Şiiliğe ve Şiilere karşı geliştirdiği iki farklı bakışı inceler. Osmanlılar Şiiliğe karşı tahkir edici bir söylem geliştirmelerine ve her fırsatta bu mezhebi "itikâd-ı bâtıla" olarak zikretmelerine karşın Şiileri Irak toplumunu oluşturan diğer öğelerle eşdeğer telakki etmişler hatta Yezidi, Şii ve Bektaşileri idari kadrolarına da tayin etmişlerdir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: 2. Abdülhamid, Sünnilik, Şiilik, Irak, İran, Osmanlı, Müçtehid.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BOA	Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi
FO	Foreign Office
A.AMD	Sadâret Âmedî Kalemi
A.DVN.DVE	Sadâret Düvel-i Ecnebiyye Kısmı
A.MKT.UM	Sadâret Mektubî Kalemi Umum Vilâyet
DH.MKT	Dahiliye Nezâreti Mektubî Kalemi
İ.HUS	İrade Hususî
İ.ML	İrade Mâliye
İ.DH	İrade Dâhiliyye
İ.M	İrade Maârif
M.V	Meclis-i Vükelâ Mazbataları
Y.A.HUS	Yıldız Sadâret Hususî Marûzât Evrâkı
Y.A.RES	Yıldız Sadâret Resmî Marûzât Evrâkı
Y.EE	Yıldız Esas Evrâkı
Y.MTV	Yıldız Mütenevvî Maruzat Evrâkı
Y.PRK.A	Yıldız Perâkende Sadâret Marûzâtı
Y.PRK.ASK	Yıldız Perâkende Askerî Marûzât
Y.PRK.AZJ	Yıldız Perâkende Arzuhal ve Jurnaller
Y.PRK.BŞK	Yıldız Perâkende Mâbeyn Başkitâbeti

Y.PRK. EŞA	Yıldız Perâkende Elçilik ve Şehbenderlik Tahrirâtı
Y.PRK.MF	Yıldız Perâkende Maarif Nezâreti Marûzâtı
Y.PRK.MK	Yıldız Perâkende Müfettişlik ve Komiserlikler Marûzâtı
Y.PRK.MŞ	Yıldız Perâkende Meşîhat Dâiresi Marûzâtı
Y.PRK.MYD	Yıldız Perâkende Yâverân ve Maiyyet-i Seniyye Erkân-ı Harbiyye Dâiresi
Y.PRK.UM	Yıldız Perâkende Umum Vilâyetler Tahrîrâtı

Abbreviations of Hijra-Months in Official Documents

M	Muharrem
S	Safer
Ra	Rebiyyü-l Evvel
R	Rebiyyü-l Âhir
Ca	Cemâziyyü-l Evvel
C	Cemâziyyü-l Âhir
B	Receb
Ş	Şa‘bân
N	Ramazan
L	Şevvâl
Za	Zilkade
Z	Zilhicce

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

During the five-years period of the U.S. occupation of Iraq, starting in March 2003 and continue to the present, there have been reports of the communal strife between Shi'is and Sunnis of Iraq in the weekly journals, on televised news, and in the headlines of the daily newspapers. Thus, while reading *İran Ahkam Defterleri* and trying to locate something worthy of analyzing with regard to the diplomatic relations between the Ottoman and Iranian governments, my curiosity was drawn to the social relations in the Iraqi region; the ever-intensifying social conflicts prompted me to research the past of the sectarian relations in nineteenth century Iraq. Indeed, as the primary sources of this historical study are the official documentation produced by either the Ottoman or the British administrators, the study turned out to be a research project focused mostly on the relations between the Shi'i masses and the Sunni Ottoman government and partly on the social relations between diverse communities of the Iraqi region. However, since contemporary historians seemed very much wed to the idea of Shi'i revival since the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution, tracing back the historical roots of a current phenomenon and drawing teleological conclusions to find the roots of the current sectarian conflicts in the past seemed the

major bias in the field to overcome. Thus, the initial endeavor of this study was to understand and describe the events pertaining to the relations between Shi'is and Sunnis of Iraq. The next step was to catalog searches done at the Ottoman Prime Ministry Archives in Istanbul. Fortunately, the call numbers of the documents belonging mostly to the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were cataloged in the archive's computer system with concise summaries. After researching some selected key words that might have related to the history of Iraq, many documents appeared whose numbers reached to the hundreds. Finally, I began to chronologically read, transliterate, and analyze these documents.

During the process of archival research, one of the first issues regarding the Ottoman engagement in Iraq that significantly stood out was the uneven increase in the official documentation providing information about a rapid development termed "the spread of Shi'ism" dating from the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This unusual case inspired me to write the second chapter of this study, entitled "Ottomans and Iranians: Natural Enemies and Eternal Friends." It predominantly developed into an endeavor of describing the traditional Ottoman bureaucratic mentality regarding the Iraqi region that came into being through the long history of religious and political conflicts between the Ottoman and Iranian governments. Particularly the chronological listing of the official documentation enabled me to have an insight into the traditional bureaucratic perspective of the Ottoman officials and then to recognize the sudden change of this stance by the Hamidian regime. Therefore, the second chapter came to present a plausible background for understanding the views of the Ottoman government on the Iraqi region, which had been the common frontier of both empires for centuries.

The Ottoman official documentation produced in the middle of the nineteenth century demonstrated that there were mainly three issues regarding the Ottoman engagement in Iraq: the repair of holy shrines, Friday *Khutbes*, and the Ottoman policy of reacquisition of lands. The repair of the holy pilgrimage sites and tombs in Iraq had been an important issue between the Ottoman and Iranian governments. The right to repair the Shi'i shrines was perceived by the rulers of both governments as a way of establishing or maintaining authority since serving the shrines had been the most effective means of gaining the legitimation and submission of the Shi'is of Iraq. Similarly, reading *Khutbes* in the name of the Sultans, as the traditional way of declaring sovereignty over a certain territory, became a source of imperial conflict between the Ottoman and Iranian governments. The last issue was the Ottoman efforts to retain peacefully the ownership of lands, which were gradually possessed by the Iranian Shi'i subjects. In general, this chapter provides an analysis of the traditional policies and power struggles between Iranian and Ottoman governments over the Iraqi region, which geographically and politically remained in the sphere of both empires. However, this study notes that the customary manner of struggle, that of reinstating the state authority over the Iraqi territory through prevention of possible governmental plans, attacks, or intrigues, changed remarkably since the early 1880s by the reign of Abdülhamid II.

What was the reason behind this noticeable change? Was it the artificial creation of the Ottoman bureaucratic circles under the Hamidian regime, reformulating the perception of the Shi'i presence in a different way? Alternatively, was it an actual process, taking place in and changing the social fabric of the Iraqi society? The uneven increase in the Ottoman official documentation concerning the spread of Shi'ism gives an impression that the alteration of the political agenda was

not until the reign of Abdülhamid II whose policy of Pan-Islamism consequently brought about a new outlook to understand both the presence and the activities of Iraqi Shi'is. Since the paramount concern of the Hamidian regime, both to preserve the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire and to unite Muslims all around the world through espousing the universal ideology of Sunni Islam, was obvious, the first explanation seemed more sensible. The Pan-Islamist endeavor of the Hamidian regime in an environment of ever-growing western imperial colonialism gained an impetus to manage a global policy of Islamism. In this context, establishing secret or open relationships with the religious shaykhs located on an extended geography such as Turkistan, India, Africa, Japan, and China to propagate the Istanbul-centered Pan-Islamism[1] and monitoring the engagement of the Protestant missionaries in the Hawaiian Isles[2] as well as watching the activities of Shi'i ulema in the Iraqi region had all received the similar attention from the Hamidian regime. However, the discourse of "the spread of Shi'ism" had further implications beyond that of being a mere bureaucratic invention. These considerations encouraged me to write the fourth chapter of this study on the "Shi'i Presence and the Spread of Shi'ism in Iraq in the late Nineteenth Century."

Yet, before introducing the fourth chapter, another issue, which distinctly emerged during the archival research and led me to write the third chapter of this study, should be first emphasized here. Archival research on the primary documents at the Ottoman Prime Ministry Archives and later at the British National Archives together raised a discrepancy and reinforced my nascent skepticism about "the spread

[1] See İhsan Süreyya Sırma, *II. Abdülhamid'in İslam Birliği Siyaseti* (İstanbul: Beyan Yayınları, 2000). In this context, the indoctrination of Sunnism was a pragmatic policy aimed at achieving the straightforward submission of masses to the Ottoman Caliph. However, it is interesting to note why the Ottoman government did not prefer to endorse the anti-governmental predispositions in the Shi'i political tradition against the imperial forces but rather favored the spread of Sunnism.

[2] See Selim Deringil, "An Ottoman View of Missionary Activity in Hawaii," *The Hawaiian Journal of History*, Vol. 27 (1993).

of Shi'ism" in the historiography on the Shi'is of Iraq. The distinguished scholars of this field such as Yitzhak Naqash and Meir Litvak, whose works will be discussed throughout the relevant parts of the chapters, explained the spread of Shi'ism with the gradual transformations taking place in the social structures of the Iraqi society through a combination of various factors. The northward movements of large tribal confederations formerly inhabiting the middle and southern parts of the Arabian Peninsula, the forced migrations of the tribal populations, and the centralization policies of the Ottoman government, which arduously worked to provide the infrastructural facilities such as building the Hindiyya Canal and opening new lands for agricultural cultivation, all were significant transformational variables. These factors, along with others, were introduced by these historians as the most remarkable ones, which achieved the settlement of tribes and disentangled the nomadic tribal identity. The concurrent rise of Shi'ism accidentally fed this necessity by providing them a new identity; thus, Shi'ism spread very rapidly due to this sociological transformation. However, this scheme seemed very oversimplified since my research at both the archives clearly demonstrated that the customary and unending tribal conflicts constituted one of the most important problems of the Iraqi region throughout the nineteenth century. Therefore, the third chapter came to present a concise critique and reconsideration of the historiography on the history of Iraqi Shi'is, questioning the chain of reasoning of the above-mentioned argumentation and finally suggesting a revised conclusion. The critique is not a total rejection but rather a reformulation.

Indeed, nineteenth century Iraq had witnessed serious social changes. One major impetus was the Tanzimat reforms, which aimed to restructure the Ottoman Empire administratively, economically, and socially. The most influential attempt for

the control over the provinces of Iraq was the application of the centralization policies, which were envisaged to achieve the settlement of tribes. Since the tribal life-style was customary, it was a reasonably arduous task for the Ottomans to realize. In the previous phases of the centralization attempts, the Ottoman authorities achieved first the integration of the unsettled elements into the political system in the form of direct conflict or cooperation, yet they never fully accomplished the settlement of tribes or disentangled their social structures. Although there was relative success in that some tribes gave up their customary way of living and adopted the sedentary life enjoying the privileges provided by the Ottoman Empire, the centralization issue remained a problematic even after the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Nevertheless, the centralization policies succeeded in the dislocation rather than the settlement of the tribes that eventually caused a certain sense of crisis among the tribal structures. Such a dislocation caused internal consolidation and homogenization of the tribal entities as well as provided the nominal adoption of Shi'ism by them. Thus, the constant struggle of the tribes residing Iraq embraced the anti-governmental motive in the Shi'i political tradition that discouraged the submission to any form of political authority in the absence of the Twelfth Imam. This furthered the dominant idea of disobedience in the Shi'i political tradition, thus penetrating into the political visions of the tribes and redressing the motivation of the tribal politics. However, this presumption is rather much more theoretical than being practical and remains exceptional. In general, both the nature and extent of this spread remained ambiguous; yet, there is still an effort to analyze the scale of the influence of this penetration in the concluding remarks of the fourth chapter.

The uneven change of the Ottoman bureaucratic mentality regarding the Shi'i presence in Iraq combined with the critical revision of the historiographical reconsiderations and encouraged me to write the fourth chapter of this study, which is about the centuries-old presence of Shi'is in and the spiritual importance of the Iraqi region. The chapter also aims to describe the social composition of the Iraqi society before discussing the nature and quality of "the spread of Shi'ism," which is the focal point of this chapter. As a common theme in the Ottoman official documentation, a strong emphasis was made upon the seriousness and urgency of the spread of Shi'ism. At a certain point, the intensity and tone of the official documentation contradictorily both encourages the researcher about the certainty of the spread of Shi'ism as a historical event and discourages the researcher through revealing his doubts since the state's intelligence over its subjects seems to be very inaccurate. Furthermore, there does not seem to be a clear reference concerning such a "spread," except for a few touches in certain contemporary chronicles. There are other sources mentioning the spread of Shi'ism; however, the ambiguity overwhelms. Therefore, in the fourth chapter, I attempted to present an alternative approach to understand the spread of Shi'ism in the Iraqi region in the late nineteenth century.

The fourth chapter, titled "Shi'i Presence and the Spread of Shi'ism in Iraq" is mainly an effort to contextualize the discourse of "the spread of Shi'ism" into a broader world-historical context of the late nineteenth century. It was both primarily the rise of Shi'i politics, not the spread of Shi'ism, that owed its emergence to the jurisprudential transformation in the Shi'i fiqh which resulted in the victory of Usulism and the transformations within the social structures which came into being through the interplay of the highly-complex and multi-faceted causes that all shared

the framework of modernity. *Akhund*s, mu'mins, and primarily the mujtahids, for instance, were rightly approached by the Ottoman officials as the effective agents of the rising Shi'i influence. The rise of Usulism at the expense of the Akhbari interpretation of the Shi'i jurisprudence generated an innovative tendency, stimulating the Shi'i scholars to understand and interpret the worldly affairs in a different manner. It gave an impetus and a peculiar function to the position of Shi'i clerical notables, consolidating their authority concerning the social as well as political matters. In this context, mujtahids began to be introduced as capable persons who could make jurisprudential judgments depending on their reason and consequently invoke authority over certain masses of people. Thus, the mujtahid consequently came to be a religious man as well as a political leader.

The rise of Usulism and the subsequent rise of mujtahids shared a common historical context with the contemporary currents of Pan-Islamism, the Dreyfus Affair, the Zionist Movement, the Irish Question, the rise of Mahdi in Egypt, accelerated activities of Christian missionaries, and the rise of William Gladstone to prominence. It was a structural change in the public sphere during the nineteenth century whose major theme had predominantly been the religious revival. Therefore, the major characteristic regarding the history of religion in the Middle East was a bilateral process, that of the homogenization of society and the consolidation of organized social movements followed by a subsequent process of politicization. Therefore, it is the important suggestion of this thesis that although the influence of Shi'ism increased over the certain segments of the Iraqi society, the spread of Shi'ism primarily meant the increased activity and organization of the Shi'i communities, which increased their effectiveness and weight in the political spectrum rather than the magnitude of spread itself.

Under the title of “Education as an Ottoman Response to the Shi’i Question,” the fifth chapter discusses the Ottoman educational counter-propaganda against the spread of Shi’ism. Although this study argues that the spread of Shi’ism was nominal in character and mainly focused upon the consolidation of the Shi’i communities around the political-religious charisma of the mujtahids, Ottoman authorities perceived the spread of Shi’ism as a process of rapid conversion of great numbers of Sunni masses to Shi’ism. Since the urgent necessity of the Iraqi region was to quell the ongoing tribal warfare and to co-opt the considerable proportion of the Iraqi population that was Shi’is, Ottoman officials embraced a policy of educational counter-propaganda. The official documentation also reveals that the officials had also attached importance to the rule that correction of faith by sword was not allowed by the Islamic laws, thus they began an extensive counter-missionary activity through disseminating Sunnism. The generated policies aimed to break the influence of the Shi’i ulema in the Iraqi region. The major strategy, which they utilized, was the promotion of Sunni education through opening medreses and sending Sunni ulema to the region. However, the ulema were to be chosen from among those who were endowed with special qualities. “To correct the beliefs” had become the main motive of the Ottoman officials. Indeed, indoctrinating Sunnism at the expense of Shi’ism had much to do with the political unity and the social integrity of the empire rather than the recurrently expressed cliché of the official documentation as to ‘correct the religion of its people.’ In fact, throughout the long history of the Ottoman Empire, there have always been heterodoxies, and the Ottoman authorities either fought against or tolerated them, but the case in the late nineteenth century was unprecedented since the government embraced the policy of educating its subjects in a massive way and ideologically combined them with the outlook of the state.

The sixth chapter discusses selected aspects of the social relations between Shi'is and Sunnis of Iraq in the late nineteenth century, mostly depending on the official administrative documentations of the Ottoman and British governments. It also presents the Muharram Commemorations as the times in which sectarian social tensions grew stronger. The chapter further examines the relations between the Iraqi Shi'is and the Sunni Ottoman government, as it was discussed in-depth in the subsection of "the Samarra Incident," which was given as the typical example of the increasing antagonism between the followers of Sunnism and Shi'ism in Iraq. However, a thorough analysis of the event reveals something different. Although the historiography introduced the social relations as very much blended with bigotry, antagonism, and unrest, it appears that social relations between the followers of the two sects were stable for the period under examination. However, the upheavals were between the Shi'i social groups and the Sunni Ottoman government rather than between Shi'is and Sunnis of Iraq. This complements the idea that the traditional political conflicts between the tribes and the governments might have gained a new vision through the adoption of the Shi'i political tradition of disobedience. Hence, the anti-governmental motive of the Shi'i tradition, which was kept alive since the early formations of Shi'i community, might have been replaced with their customary resistance to the Ottoman governmental authority.

The seventh chapter explores the Ottoman treatment of Shi'is and the discourse generated by the Ottoman officials regarding the Shi'is of Iraq. The mode of Ottoman engagement in the Shi'is of Iraq seems highly complex. During the course of the nineteenth century, Ottoman officials developed a two-dimensional outlook regarding both the Shi'ism and the Shi'is of Iraq. On the ideological dimension, Ottomans perceived Shi'ism as a theological deviation from the true path

of Islam, thus a heretic belief whose followers could not be trusted anymore. On the historical dimension, Ottomans viewed the Iraqi Shi'is as being similar to that of other local figures who made up the Iraqi population, however, connected to the political ambitions of the Persian governments. The Ottoman authorities used an abusive discourse exclusively in their official documentation against Shi'ism as a branch of theology. It was recurrently expressed in the official documentation that the Shi'i belief was false and heretical whereby Shi'is could be potentially disloyal; however, Ottoman officials appointed Shi'is or Yezidis to their administrative offices. Similarly, the Ottoman authorities adopted two seemingly contradictory policies, that of gaining the goodwill and consent of the powerful Shi'i mujtahids and of taking necessary measures to prevent the spread of Shi'ism, which was sponsored by these Shi'i mujtahids. Therefore, this chapter aims to understand the complexities of the Ottoman perception and treatment of Shi'ism and Shi'is.

Sources and Methodology

This study was born out of a desire for analyzing a historical problematic with the methods of modern scholarship. Following the history-writing tradition at Bilkent University, I attached principal importance to the primary sources mostly produced by the Ottoman and British officials. However, both the overwhelming inaccuracy and uncertainty of the Ottoman and the British official documentation and the inherent bias of the administrators necessitated a critical stand. The official documentation seemed indispensable from one perspective, however, misleading from another. Therefore, the researcher needs an analytical compass in order to realize his position and to measure the reasonable limits of historical interpretation. The conjectural historical context, in this regard, works to dispose of the

irregularities and complexities of the historical information, if not totally sacrifices the reality.

The British National Archives in London contains many useful registers concerning the history of Iraq. These registers were compiled through bringing together the internal and external official correspondences, periodical reports, and translations of important news from newspapers published for the time being. The content of these registers were mostly driven by the sources, which informs about the current events and reflecting the attitudes of the British Councilors. A significant remark for a researcher who wants to use these sources would be to remain vigilantly aware with regard to the transliteration of private names whether of persons or places. The names were recorded with varying differences. For instance, there are various versions of the transliteration of Basra such as Busrah, Bussorah, Bassarah, Basrah, and Basra. The same is true for Baghdad and Mosul provinces since these registers were inconsistently recorded the names as Bagdad or Baghdad, and for Mosul as Mossul, Mousul, or Mosul. Other examples of this inconsistency can be seen in the recorded names of people from Turkish, Persian, or Arabian origin. For instance, in a document, Müşir Fevzi Paşa, as it was written in Turkish, was recorded as “Fawzi Pasha,” while in another document as “Faouzee Pasha.” This was a natural result of phonetic translations of foreign names, which was possibly very well understood for the time being, however, needs the special attention of researcher. Therefore, many alternatives are necessary to be tried in order to reach the related documents.

According to Christoph Herzog, the historical records kept in the British National Archives concerning the Ottoman administration in Iraq in the nineteenth century are less reliable due to the “turcophobic bias” described in the words of

Colonel A. Kemball as "the proverbial improvidence and mismanagement of Turkish Officials."[3] The scope of those sources are limited with the information obtained through scarce observations in the region, from abundantly gossip, institutional correspondences, personal network communication, and official correspondences between the British Consulate and the Ottoman provincial administration. Since the Ottoman government assumed the British presence to be dangerous in many senses, the channel of information was not always open for the British administrators to obtain from them. Although one of the major sources of information largely confined to gossip, however, the personal contacts of the British officials with the unofficial local notables of the Iraqi region is noteworthy and gives invaluable information about the intentions and political capabilities of local groups.

Ottoman official documentation, on the other hand, gives unreliable information about the local situations. As it will be discussed in the fourth chapter of this study, the official reports dispatched to the imperial center give contradictory and misleading comments about the subject matters. The reflection of a similar problem can also be seen in the Ottoman administration of Albania. Isa Blumi argued that obtaining reliable information was a serious problem for the Ottoman central administrators since "Ottoman officials lacked the kind of intelligence-gathering resources and networking that the Catholic Church and the Austrian consul have much more reliable sources of information."[4] However, it is noteworthy to mention that there is an obvious change in the Ottoman official documentation since the reign of Abdülhamid II. The documents concerning the Iraqi region that were produced during the Hamidian period are better organized and more systematic when

[3] Christoph Herzog, "Corruption and the Limits of the State in the Ottoman Province of Baghdad during 19th Century," *The MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol 3 (Spring 2003), 38.
[4] Isa Blumi, "Thwarting the Ottoman Empire: Smuggling Through the Empire's New Frontiers in Yemen and Albania, 1878-1910," *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, 9 (Summer 2003), 274.

compared to the ones produced during reigns of Sultan Abdülmecid and Sultan Abdülaziz. In addition, there is an evident increase in the numbers of produced documents during the Hamidian regime as well.

CHAPTER 2

OTTOMANS AND IRANIANS: NATURAL ENEMIES AND ETERNAL FRIENDS[5]

Religious and non-religious motives together played decisive roles in shaping the political and military struggles between the Ottoman and Iranian Empires. These struggles were carried out in the lands of Azerbaijan, Eastern Anatolia, and Iraq, which together constituted a frontier zone from north to south. In the context of this study, Iraq occupied an important place in these struggles, both as representing a vital component of this frontier and as housing various diverse ethnic and religious communities. However, Iraq, where a concentrated Shi'i presence constituted a sizable proportion of the society in which the highly esteemed Shi'i education was developed, represented the utmost significance of this frontier regarding the imperial relations between Ottomans and Iranians. From the sixteenth century onwards, hence, Iraq remained a battleground between the Ottoman and the Safavid, and later the Qajar, Empires.

[5] I borrowed this highly explanatory title with a slight difference from an article by Gökhan Çetinsaya "Essential Friends and Natural Enemies: The Historical Roots of Turkish-Iranian Relations" *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (September 2003). Indeed, the Ottoman authorities used the term "natural enemy" in their official correspondences. As representing the governmental hostility, they called Iran "the natural enemy of the Iraqi region." (*Hıtta-i Irakiyyenin düşman-ı tabiiyyesi Iran devleti olub)* BOA, Y.PRK.MK 4/80, 27/L/1306 (26 June 1889).

Baghdad, for instance, one of the most important cities in the region, changed hands three times between the Ottomans and the Safavids in one and a half centuries. It was "conquered only under Sultan Süleyman Kanuni in the mid-1530s [then], was lost again to Safavid Shah 'Abbas in 1623 and reconquered by Murat IV in 1638."[6] However, despite the fact that their control of the central Iraq was short, comprising "a mere forty-two years during the 220-year life span of the dynasty, Safavids never gave up their rhetorical and theoretical claim to Iraq."[7] Although Murat IV carried out "impressive campaigns against Erivan (1635) and Baghdad (1638-39), these areas were simply recaptured from the Safavids, and Erivan was held for less than a year."[8] The Safavids, just as the Ottomans, always looked for opportunities to recapture Iraq, as was the case through the negotiations of the extradition of Sultan Beyazid and during the rebellion of Uzun Ahmed against the Ottomans.

Although the religious importance of the region was at stake, Iraq was also important for its geo-strategic position. Shah Ismail's endeavor, for instance, to save Iraq from Akkuyunlu domination was less about religious commitment or ideological concerns to keep the holy shrines under his control and more about his attempt to consolidate his power in the region by eliminating potential rivals. It was rather the later historiography formed during the reigns of Shah Abbas I and Shah Abbas II that "related the military action to religious fervor."[9] According to Niewöhner-Eberhard, "the real focus of confrontation between the two parties was eastern Anatolia and western Azerbaijan. Iraq was significant because it constituted a commercial transit route between Europe and India." The main character of the Ottoman-Safavid

[6] Christoph Herzog, "Corruption and Limits of the State in the Ottoman Province of Baghdad," 38-39.
[7] Rudi Matthee, "The Safavid-Ottoman Frontier: Iraq-ı Arab As Seen By the Safavids," in *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, Vol. 9, (Summer 2003), 157-58.
[8] Cemal Kafadar, "The Question of Ottoman Decline," *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* Vol. 4, No: 1-2, (1997-1998), 45.
[9] Rudi Matthee, "The Safavid-Ottoman Frontier," 160-62.

relations was the "occupation without annexation" regarding the Iraq-i Arab in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[10]

Economic, political, strategic, and religious concerns were equally important in the struggle over Iraq. Iranian rulers, despite the official Shi'i creed being important to them, envisioned Iraq and its Shrines as an immanent part of their geography. Indeed, the effort was to invent a tradition that presented religious zeal as a driving force both inside and outside the Iranian territories. "Safavid engagement in Iraq-ı 'Arab was naturally colored by the dynasty's strong affinity with the region as an important source of Shi'i history, but it was, on balance, informed by caution and pragmatism more than by ideological commitment."[11]

Despite the weighty importance of non-religious motives, religious factors also played key roles in driving the two empires into political and military conflicts, particularly over the Iraqi region. From the sixteenth century onwards, the Ottoman Iranian political struggle "was at times as bitter as any struggle between Ottomans and the Christians of the *dar-ul-harb*, and the bitterness is reflected in the religious legitimation of the actions of the respective rulers."[12] The eastward expansion of the Ottoman Empire with the victory of Sultan Selim I against the Shi'i Safavids in 1514, known as *Çaldıran Muharebesi*, and the subsequent conquests of Syria and Egypt enabled the Ottoman Empire to benefit from the immense and complex network of the Asian frontier. Three major cities of the region, namely Damascus, Jerusalem, and Cairo, in addition to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, came under

[10] Ibid., 166-70. For the concept "occupation without annexation" also see C.R. Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Romans Empire: A Social and Economic Study* (Baltimore, 1994); D.L. Kennedy "Cladius Subatianus Aquila: First Prefect of Mesopotamia," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 36 (1979), 255-62.

[11] Rudi Matthee, "The Safavid-Ottoman Frontier," 172-73.

[12] Selim Deringil, "The Struggle Against Shiism in Hamidian Iraq: A Study in Ottoman Counter-Propaganda," *Die Welt Des Islams*, Vol. 5 (1990), 58.

Ottoman domination.[13] These conquests gave some peculiar characteristics to the Ottoman Empire, which would come to shape the course of its future relations. Amongst these, inheritance of the caliphate, especially the being protector of Sunni Islam, was the most significant feature that added a unique dimension to the imperial struggles between these two empires.

The Safavid Empire, on the other hand, though dependent upon the Turkic tribal forces, "was not a tribal confederacy on the usual lines, but a religious fraternity which made use of tribal links but could set them aside at need in favour of a higher calling." Likewise, as it was a well-established fact, "the dynasty did not merely favour the Shi'ah; it seriously set about enforcing conversion to the Shi'ah upon the whole population."[14] The predominance of Twelver Shi'ism bestowed a unifying identity upon the people living on the lands ruled by the Safavids, although the price was enforced conversions. Furthermore, this situation created "a chronic hostility" in the political relations between the Ottomans and the Safavids and influenced the political alliances that were established with the Portuguese in the south and the Russians in the north against the Ottoman Empire.[15]

The hostilities between the rulers of the two empires, along with other political and military factors, carried a religious dimension that was manifested in the policies applied to the frontier regions. Hence, one of the first acts of the rulers as the protectors of one denomination or the other was related to religious matters. The discourse of the letters written by Selim I in Persian and sent to Shah Ismail in 1514 shows that the justification of the Ottoman Sultan was based on religious terms. In his letter, Selim wrote that:

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[13] Salih Özbaran, *Bir Osmanlı Kimliği: 14.-17. Yüzyıllarda Rûm/Rûmî Aidiyet ve İmgeleri*, (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2004), 34.
[14] Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, Volume 3, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), 30.
[15] Ibid, 33.

> The Ulema and our teachers of the law have pronounced death upon thee [Shah Ismail], perjurer, and blasphemer as thou art, and have laid upon every Mussulman the sacred duty of sacred arms for the defense of religion, and for the destruction of heresy and impiety in thy person and the persons of those who follow thee.[16]

Hence, the forced conversions of the Iranian people to Shi'ism had created social hatred towards Shah Ismail. Thus, Toynbee noted that following the victory of *Çaldıran*, "Selim was able to enter Tabriz not merely as a conqueror but as a liberator; for his first act was to reconvert to the service of the Sunnah the mosques which had been arbitrarily converted to the service of the Shi'ah."[17]

In times of war as well as in times of peace, it was more difficult, particularly for the Persian pilgrims, to enter into the Ottoman lands for pilgrimage purposes. During the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent, for instance, Iranian pilgrims were not allowed access, despite the fact that an official firman issued by the same sultan guaranteed the access of every Muslim to Hijaz for pilgrimage.[18] For the Ottomans, the visits of the Iranians, especially the high-ranking Iranian officials, were enough to raise suspicions about the political perils to come. They feared their possible contacts with the local powerful notables, whether religious or non-religious, who may collude with the Iranian Shah against the Ottoman Sultan. Hence, Shi'i pilgrims were urged to follow a longer and a more dangerous road to Mecca.[19] These precautions were primarily taken against the Persian pilgrims, not against the Ottoman Shi'i subjects residing in Iraq or Bahrain. Permission for the Iranian Shi'i pilgrims to visit the holy shrines in Baghdad, Karbala, and Najaf was one of the articles of the Amasya Treaty signed between the Ottoman and the Safavid Empires.

[16] Rouhollah K. Ramazani, *The Foreign Policy of Iran: A Developing Nation in World Affairs 1500-1941*, (Virginia: The University Press of Virginia, 1966), 17.
[17] Donald Edgar Pitcher, *An Historical Geography of the Ottoman Empire: From Earliest Times to the End of the Sixteenth Century*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972), 102; Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Vol I, (Oxford, 1939).
[18] Suraiya Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans: The Hajj under the Ottomans 1517-1683* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd Publishers, 1994), 127-28.
[19] Ibid, 148-51.

It was a costly price paid by Shah Tahmasb to Süleyman the Magnificent and meant the recognition of Ottoman rule over Basra, Baghdad, Şehrizor, Van, Bitlis, Erzurum, Kars, and Atabegler.[20]

As fostered by the customary and continuous visits of Iranian officials to Atabat, the ever-growing suspicions of Ottoman officials prolonged the fears of the Iranian threat over Iraq, which was geographically and politically in the sphere of Iran.[21] Although, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there were the factors that abated the hostility such as the expansion of European imperialism and the maintenance of Silk Road trade that the drew two empires closer,[22] recurrent political and military conflicts sustained the suspicions of the two major powers in the region. In the eighteenth century, during the reign of Nadir Shah, who was known to be a great conqueror yet an enthusiastic but discontented ruler, struggles over the Iraqi region continued. "Even the second treaty of Erzurum that the Porte concluded with Iran in 1847 did not put an end to incidents on the border."[23]

In the course of diplomatic negotiations in around 1736 between the Ottomans and the Iranians during the reigns of Mahmut I and Nadir Shah, the recognition of the Caferi interpretation of Shi'ism as the fifth legitimate sect of Islam constituted one of the most important articles of the negotiations. The quest of Nadir Shah seemed sensible to the Ottomans since Prussia and Russia emerged as rival powers to the existing international system in the first half of the eighteenth century. Although Koca Râgıb Mehmed Pasha, the Reisülküttab at the time and later a powerful Sadrazam, insisted on the outward recognition of the Caferi sect, he yet proposed the application of Sunni Hanefi law in practice. However, the "official"

[20] İlhan Şahin-Feridun Emecen, "Amasya Antlaşması," DİA., V 3, (İstanbul: 1991), 4.
[21] BOA, Y.PRK.MYD 23/18, 1317 (1899).
[22] Stanford J Shaw, "Iranian Relations with the Ottoman Empire in the Eigteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol 7, 313.
[23] Herzog, Cristoph. "Corruption and Limits of the State in the Ottoman Province of Baghdad," 38-39.

outlook of the Ottoman bureaucratic circles was very adamant, thus precluding the approval of Nadir Shah's request.[24]

The historical chronicles kept the Safavid imagination and engagement with the Iraqi region alive from the sixteenth century onwards. Securing "the sacred geography"[25] had been one of the central aspects of this engagement. In this regard, the narration of Khvandamir that was mostly written during the reign of Shah Ismail, yet completed in the beginning of the reign of Shah Tahmasb in 1524, deserves special attention. Khvandamir had devoted "two-and-a-half pages to Shah Ismail's conquest of Baghdad, half of which is taken up by an account of pilgrimage the Shah performed to the 'A*tabat*."[26] Furthermore, the visit of Shah Ismail to the holy shrine of Karbala was depicted very vividly: "The tomb draped with brocade and the walls and the pillars of the sanctuary with other precious cloth and the courtyard covered with the silk *kilim*s" including the "twelve candle holders of pure gold devoted to the shrine and free meals distributed among visiting pilgrims and city's residents."[27]

Similarly, Evliya Çelebi described the capture of Baghdad from the hands of Safavids during the reign of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent. He particularly pointed out the Sunni shrine of Abdülkadir Geylânî, which was claimed to be deliberately defiled by the Shi'i governors of the city. Suraiya Farouqhi highlights the symbolic value of the tomb in political struggles between the Ottomans and the Safavids. The tomb had been appointed with various gifts donated by the Ottomans, while it was damaged by the Safevid administrators.[28] Evliya further narrated that after the citadel of Baghdad was conquered by Süleyman and his soldiers, they first

[24] Koca Râgıb Mehmed Paşa, *Tahkik ve Tevfik: Osmanlı İran Diplomatik Münasebetlerinde Mezhep Tartışmaları*, prepared by Ahmet Zeki İzgöer, (İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2003), XXI-LVI.
[25] Rudi Matthee, "The Safavid-Ottoman Frontier," 69. For the concept, "sacred geography," see Mansur Sifatgul, *Sakhtar-i nihad va andishah-ı dini dar 'Iran-i 'asr-i Safavi*, (Tehran, 1381/2002).
[26] Ibid, 158-59.
[27] Ibid, 159.
[28] Suraiya Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans*,143-45.

adorned the towers of the citadel with Ottoman flags. Then they visited the tombs of Imam Azam ebu-Hanifa and Abdülkadir Geylânî, who symbolized Sunni Islam, which was defended by the Ottoman Empire. Immediately, the Sultan donated 100,000 gold pieces to the lodging house (*imaret*) of Imam Azam. Afterwards, the Sultan continued by visiting the tombs of Kassâb Cömerd, Mûsâ Kâzım, Imam Hüseyin, and Imam Ali, son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad.[29]

Sectarian outlooks played an influential role in shaping the imperial imaginations concerning the Iraqi region until the first decade of the twentieth century. Şemsettim Sami, for instance, the writer of the voluminous universal dictionary who lived two and a half centuries after Evliya Çelebi, emphasized the presence of the tombs of Imam Musa Kazim, Imam Azam ebu-Hanife, Imam Hanbel, Cüneyd, Şiblî, Ma'ruf Kerhî, and Abdülkadir Geylânî in the article "Baghdad," as these tombs were the common symbols of the collective Sunni memory.[30]

The implications of the geographical proximity and shared ethnic and religious complexities were also visible in the modern politics of the region. In September 1980, the Iraqi government explained the official reason behind its attack against Iran as being that of retaliating against "terrorist acts and sabotage by infiltrators who came in from Iran, by Iranian residents in Iraq, and by other people or Iranian origin, who set about committing a large number of murders and injuries from explosions."[31] Thus, the geographical proximity as well as the sectarian composition of the two countries have long been reasons for suspicion between the Iraqi and Iranian governments, if not tools for political maneuvers, from the early phases of confrontations until modern times. Although such imaginings continued,

[29] Evliya Çelebi b. Derviş Mehemmed Zillî, *Evliya Çelebi Seyehatnamesi*, Vol. 4, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2001), 241-45.
[30] Şemsettin Sami, *Kamus-ul Âlâm*, Vol II, 1325.
[31] Joyce N. Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as*, (Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992), 1.

the political struggles were reformulated in different contexts. In the following part, the general characteristics of the Ottoman policy regarding Iraq before the massive change in the political vision in the last quarter of the nineteenth century will be discussed.

2.1 Reflections of the Traditional Sources of Conflict in the Midst of the Nineteenth Century

Research at the Ottoman Prime Ministry Archives in Istanbul regarding the Ottoman involvement in Iraqi Shi'is in the midst of the nineteenth century revealed that there were three major issues: repairing the holy shrines, reading khutbes in the name of the sultans, and closely watching the changes in private land ownership. These issues were among the traditional sources of ensuring the authority of the Ottoman Sultan over Iraqi territory. Thus, these issues were upheld by the past as well as contemporary rulers of the region. Serving the holy shrines was important for both the personal accounts of the believers and for the states as being the sources of legitimacy whereas the Friday khutbes had been the times in which political authorities manifested themselves to their subjects from the early Umayyads to Republican Turkey, thus becoming the grounds for the quest for power.

These features were visible in the Iranian-Ottoman struggle over Iraq from the early centuries of confrontation until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The Ottoman authorities had formulated a traditional policy of fighting against the Iranian Empires. Since the Iranian governments had made "constant and continuous attempts" (*teşebbüsât-ı mütemâdiyye*)[32] to penetrate into the political, social, and religious affairs of the Iraqi region, this traditional policy came to thwart any attempt

[32] BOA Y.PRK.MŞ. 6/18, 20/Ş/1313 (23 January 1896).

of Iranian governments and preclude their possible threats to the Ottoman sovereignty in Iraq. 'Ascertaining the authority' had been the principle concern of the Ottoman governments.

In this regard, the centuries-old presence of Shi'is and Shi'ism in Iraq was perceived by the Ottoman authorities in relation to Iranian political ambitions. Nixon, British Consular in Iraq, wrote in 1877 that:

> Rightly or wrongly the Turkish authorities ascribe all these difficulties at Karbala and Najaf and on the Euphrates to the intrigues of the Persian Government, and naturally so, as the great mass of the population at Karbala are Persians of the Shiah sect who have a fierce desire to emancipate themselves from Sunni threat and regain the Shrines for the Shah of Persia.[33]

On the eve of an Iranian military attack, which was highly expected by the Ottomans for the time being, Nixon's statement briefly outlines the traditional fears of the Ottoman governors. Since the presence of Persian Shi'is in Karbala constituted a great mass of the total population, the suspicions of the Ottoman officials were not exclusively groundless. Did the Persian Shi'is really have a desire for regaining the shrines for the Shah of Persia?

There is an answer to this question, which shows that a political discourtesy, supposed to be shown for the Iranian state officials, could have upset the Persian Shi'is immensely. According to the document, a reception was held at the Persian Consulate in Baghdad in honor of the birthday of the Iranian Shah. The Vali of Baghdad instead of paying a customary visit to the Persian Consulate sent his Christian interpreter, who went there in "plain clothes." Hence, the Persian Council did not recognize Davud Efendi, the interpreter, as a substitute for Vali. This incident "has given a great offence not only to the Persian community at Baghdad which is very large but to the Shi'is in general, who regarded it as an intentional discourtesy

[33] FO 195/1142, Document No: 36 (17 July 1877). From Colonel J.P. Nixon, Political Agent in Turkish Arabia to the Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department.

and as a work of the present Vali's fanatical hatred of their sect."[34] According to the document, this was an incident which upset not only the Shi'i Persian residents in Baghdad but also the Shi'i Ottoman subjects.

The competition between the two empires through defending one major denomination of Islam against the other established a bureaucratic repertoire. It may be argued that as long as the technological and diplomatic tools of the confrontations between the two empires had not changed, this repertoire shaped the political agenda of the Ottoman Empire regarding the Iraqi region throughout the nineteenth century. However, the reign of Abdülhamid II epitomized a deviation from this traditional policy since he developed a modern systematic strategy to integrate the people living within the official borders of the Empire around the single ideology of Sunni Islam. Representing a shift from traditional to modern governance, two main changes had occurred. First, the Ottoman bureaucrats had very lately realized the potential power of the Iraqi Shi'is, who were powerful enough to generate their own political visions. Second, acting in accordance with the conjectural necessities of world politics, the Ottoman officials formulated a policy of Pan-Islamism in the leadership of Abdülhamid II to unite the people of the Empire. Thus, the presence of Shi'is and Shi'ism in Iraq came to be understood in a different manner at the point where these two changes in the Ottoman bureaucratic mentality merged. This chapter aims to analyze this shift in bureaucratic mentality with stress on the traditional ways of preserving authority in Iraq as practiced by the Ottomans.

[34] FO 195/1409, Document No: 2, (10 January 1882) From Trevor Chichele Plowden, the British Council General at Baghdad to the British Ambassador at Constantinople.

2.2 Repair of the Holy Shrines

Following the 1970s and later the 1980s, Saddam Hussein had begun simultaneously to practice a bilateral policy of torture and deference. On the one hand, he terrorized the high-ranking members of the Shi'i oppositional movements, such as the Da'wah Party and religiously popular figures such as the arrest of Muhammad Bâqir as-Sadr. On the other, he showed "greater deference to the Shi'i ulema [spending millions of Iraqi dinars] on shrines, mosques, husayniyyahs, pilgrims, and other affairs of religion, dispensing funds impartially to both Shi'i and Sunni establishments." [35] Furthermore, he paid visits to Holy Shrines; declared the birthday of Ali, son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad, a national holiday; claimed his family descended from the Prophet Muhammad; and he ardently mentioned the names of Shi'i Imams in his address to the Iraqi people[36]. Although there were differences in the normative aspects of historical circumstances, Saddam Hussein practiced similar formal methods that both the Ottoman and the Persian rulers used to maintain their authority over the Iraqi region in the previous centuries.

For the Hamidian regime in particular, Selim Deringil noted:

> Demonstrating his monogram (*tuğra*) on all public works completed in his time, inaugurating the clock towers in small Anatolian towns, rebuilding the tomb of *Ertuğrul*, sending imperial gifts to Kaaba during the Ramadan before the thousands of people, pitching tents on Mina, and providing the holy mantle of Kaaba on which the Sultan's name was written [were the ways of] visual confirmation of the Sultan's sovereignty.[37]

In this context, the repair of the holy shrines had been an important matter between the Ottoman and Iranian Empires. It was perceived by both sides as a way of ascertaining authority over a certain geography and people. For this reason, the

[35] Hanna Batatu, "Iraq's Underground Shi'i Movements," *MERIP Reports*, No. 102, Islam and Politics. (Jan., 1982), 7.
[36] Ibid, 7.
[37] Selim Deringil. *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1909*, (London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 1998), 29-34.

Iranian consulate was trying to find opportunities on various occasions to obtain permission from the Ottoman authorities to repair such places in Baghdad and Basra. However, the Ottomans were very strict about the matter. They refused the proposals of Iranians and they themselves tended to repair them. It was a symbolic struggle to exercise sovereignty to become the protector of the lands where the holy relics and tombs were situated.

The reason behind the Ottoman governors' strict restriction of Iranian representatives to repair these places or construct new buildings in the holy shrines was the governors' distrust of the activities of the Iranians in the Iraqi region. The long history of imperial conflicts had reinforced their skepticisms. The Ottomans did not allow the representatives of the mother of Shah Ismail II to construct a lodging house (*imaret*) meant only to serve to the Persian pilgrims during her visit to the holy shrines of Karbala and Najaf (1576-77). Similarly, when *Perihan Sultan*, sister of the Shah, wanted to donate carpets to some mosques in Iraq, the Ottomans kindly refused her benevolence. However, if the gifts had already reached these places, the Ottoman officials did not send them back.[38]

Three centuries later, it was still possible to see examples of the same distrust. The management of the Shi'i Shrines was in the hands of the Ottomans who appointed each of them certain custodians. The specific name of the custodian was *kiliddar*, meaning key keeper, who was responsible for collecting the payments from the attendants. Except for the staff at Samarra who was Sunni, the other k*iliddars* were Shi'is. The Department of Religious Endowments, *Evkaf*, was responsible for the financial support of these shrines.[39] However, the Shah's visit to the Shrine of Imam Hussein in Kerbela in the middle of the nineteenth century showed that

[38] Suraiya Faroqhi. *Pilgrims and Sultans*, 138-39.
[39] FO 195/2338, No: 97/4 (31 January 1910) A Confidential report that gives information about "Religions and Sects of the Persian Gulf Region."

Kiliddars could have acted on certain occasions as they wished. Some time after the Shah's visit, the Ottoman Consulate in Tehran reported in 1851 that the *Kiliddar* of the tomb had given the Shah 'the butt of a sword and some other precious relics' kept there. Since the Ottoman officials did not allow such arbitrariness by any means, they took the matter seriously, thus an investigation was conducted.[40] However, it is interesting to see that the *kiliddar* had acted freely as if he had been authorized to gift the relics. Furthermore, although the event took place in Karbala, Ottoman officials learned of the events not only after a long period had elapsed but also from the Ottoman Consulate in Tehran. One may easily presume that Shah's visit must have been performed in a sermonial way. Therefore, two serious questions arise: why did the local officials not accompany the Shah and his retinue or, at least, why did they not monitor his visit? Forty years after this event, Ottoman officials surprisingly experienced a similar event in 1892. On the inscription panel above the door of the tomb of Imam Musa al-Kadhim in Baghdad, the name of the Nasir ad-Dîn Shah had been written instead of the name of the Ottoman Sultan.[41] It is unknown for how long the name of the Shah was there, but it is certain that these and other parallel cases were sustaining the Ottoman fears about the increasing influence of Iranians over the Iraqi region.

When al-Hajj Mezahâri, a well-known and respected Iranian merchant living in Karbala, wanted to construct a caravanserai for the benefit of the poor, the Ottoman authorities minutely questioned the purpose of the construction, while the discourse of the document revealed the strong doubts and suspicious mentality of the local Ottoman administrators of Baghdad.[42] Similarly, construction of a school and a

[40] BOA, A.MKT.UM 49/25, 16/R/1267 (17 February 1851).
[41] BOA, Y.MTV 65/92, 21/M/1310 (14 August 1892) From Zeki, Aide-de-Camp to the Sultan, the Director of *Tophâne-i Âmire*, and the Superintendent of the General Military Schools.
[42] BOA A.MKT.UM 110/78, 10/M/1269 (23 October 1852) From Constantinople to Vali of Baghdad.

house in Najaf that was sponsored by the Iranian Prince Sayf ud-Dawlah was recessed by an official decree. The Iranian Consulate in Baghdad asked for the continuation of the construction. However, the Ottoman government frustrated the efforts of the Iranian Consulate. Moreover, the Ottoman central administration advised the local governors to apply the same policy when they were confronted with similar cases in the future.[43]

The Ottoman authorities received some preliminary information from the Ottoman Consulate in Tehran about the possible attempts of Iranians to repair the holy shrines near Baghdad. The consulate was informed by the central government that the duty of repairing the shrines belonged to no authority other than the Ottoman Empire. As it was described in the official documentation as "a definite legal rule,"[44] therefore Iranians would have no right to repair the shrines by any means. Their requests, if they were somehow made, should have immediately been rejected, and the Ottoman central authority should have been notified about those places that needed repair.

Iranian Shahs were constantly asking for permission from the Ottoman authorities to undertake the duty of repairing the shrines in the Atabat, a collective name meaning a group of Shi'i shrines in Iraq.[45] For instance, the minaret of the tomb of Imam Ali, son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad, was in danger of falling apart and needed repair. Although it would cost a large amount, approximately 100,000 *kuruş*,[46] *Meclîs-i Ahkâm-ı Adliyye* decided to repair the minaret apparently for three reasons: first, their respect for Imam Ali; second, the tomb was one of the

[43] BOA A.MKT.UM 110/46, 5/M/1269 (18 October 1852) From Constantinople to the Marshal of the Imperial Army in Iraq and Hijaz and Vali of Baghdad.

[44] BOA A.MKT.UM 119/9, 16/Ra/1269 (27 December 1852) From Constantinople to Vali of Baghdad; BOA A.MKT.UM 119/4, 16/Ra/1269 (27 December 1852) From Constantinople to Ottoman Consulate in Tehran.

[45] BOA Y.A.HUS 192/98, 25/9/1303 (26 July 1886) From Sadrazam Kamil, Sublime Porte.

[46] When compared with the total income from funerary taxes to the Atabat in 1892, which was 330.757 kuruş, it was corresponding nearly to one third of the yearly revenues.

most visited places in the region; and third, because of the statement of the Iranian Shah for the repair. Indeed, the scribe of the document had first written that it was "the request of the Iranian Consulate" (*İran Devleti Sefâreti'nden muahharan vuku' bulan istirhâm üzerine*), but then crossed out the expression and changed it into "the statement of the Iranian Consulate" (*İran Devleti Sefâreti'nden muahharan vuku' bulan ifâde üzerine*), which carried more neutral connotations.[47]

From the point of view of the shahs, the demand for the repairs had also been connected with internal politics of Iran. Shahs were aware of the power of the Iraqi Shi"i ulema since they attacked the Russian Consulate and organized certain masses to fight against the Russians during the reign of Fath Ali Shah.[48] Therefore, as a matter of internal politics, the shahs strove to obtain the support of the ulema by way of these "good deeds." On the one hand, the Ottomans were also looking for the consent of both the ulema and Shi'i people and were serving shrines to strengthen the legitimacy of their local and international power; on the other, these shrines were also important places according to their worldviews. The previously given examples of this traditional policy, just as the endeavor of Sultan Abdülmecid to donate gold and silver candlesticks to the shrines in Karbala and Najaf,[49]were extending from the beginning of the early conquest of the region until the fall of the empires.

The establishment of mosques in which the official faith was indoctrinated was one of the essential methods of reinstating the state authority over the heterodox populations of the Empire. When the Ottomans attempted to convert the Yezidis, they spent "13,000 kuruş for the construction of a mosque and a school in a Yezidi

[47] BOA A.MKT.UM 527/48, 22/C/1278 (24 December 1861) From Constantinople to Vali of Baghdad.
[48] Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran: The Role of the Ulema in the Qajar Period, 1785-1906*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1969), 82-93.
[49] BOA Y.EE 12/12. A memorandum presented to the Sublime Port without name and date.

Village called Patrak where the majority had [eventually] converted to Islam."[50] However, there were also Yezidis who rejected complying with the demands of the government. They were punished by the government until they embraced Sunni Islam. Furthermore, Deringil stated:

> Yezidi leaders further complicated matters by contacting the French council in Mosul and telling him that the community was prepared to embrace Christianity if France could protect them against Ömer Vehbi Pasha, [who was a general and] posted to the Vilayet of Mosul as 'the commander of the reformatory force' (*fırka-i ıslahiye kumandanı*).[51]

The quest for serving the shrines had considerable political connotations as to gaining the consent of the people and declaring their obedience to the ruler. The governments wanted to benefit from the symbolic power of those shrines, which were very much respected by Shi'is of Iran, Iraq, and India. Thus, Ottoman governors refused on various occasions the demands of Iranian officials to construct buildings or repair the holy tombs. Ottoman officials were very determined not to authorize them even once, as it was the same reason behind the rejection of the request of Mukhsin Hasan Shah by Sadrazam Kamil Pasha. As it was stated in the Ottoman official documentation, allowing the Iranian Shahs to perform such activities might cause to the popular recognition of the Shahs as the spiritual guard of the region, which was the chief fear of the Ottomans. (*Bu def'âlık dahî ruhsât-ı matlûbenin i'tâsı halinde şâh-ı müşârun ileyh hakkında iltifât-ı cihândır can cenâb-ı tâcdârînin yeni bir eser-i celîli ibrâz buyurulmuş olacağı vârid-i hâtır-ı kâsır olmasıyla.)*[52]

[50] Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 71-72.
[51] Ibid, 71-71.
[52] BOA Y.A.HUS 193/86, 25/10/1303 (26 July 1886) From Sadrazam Kamil Pasha Sublime Porte.

2.3 Friday *Khutbes*

Friday Khutbes are central both in the personal accounts of the believers and for the social psychology of public worship. Furthermore, the announcement of the sultan's name in the Friday *Khutbes* has been the traditional source of legitimacy for the state and the sultan's proclamation of authority, including the declaration of protectorate over certain sections of society. There are various cases of discussions between the Ottoman and Iranian governments over the control of bordering regions since those places remained a matter of unresolved dispute. After the triumph of the Usuli School over the Akhbaris, the idea that argued the Friday congregational prayers the usurpation of the occulted Twelfth Imam's right, changed. However, the Usuli School legalized the Friday congregational prayers even in absence of the Twelfth Imam whose authority was represented by rightful Mujtahids. That is why the Friday congregational prayers became a problem between two empires after the triumph of Usuli School, which will be explained later in detail.[53]

According to an Ottoman document, a public uproar occurred due to the announcement of the Shah's name in a Friday *Khutbe*. The public uproar took place in a region which had recently come under Iranian control, yet whose inhabitants were Sunnis. The Shah ordered his name to be announced in Friday prayers in the mosques of this region as a political maneuver since the commission on measuring the Ottoman-Iranian boundary was approaching that place. Before Friday came, people were warned that whoever refused the order of the Shah would be punished. When the people gathered for the Friday prayer and heard the name of the Shah

[53] Cole, Juan R.I. *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq: Religion and State in Awadh, 1722-1859*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1988), 129-30. Cole specifically explains its beginnings in Lucknow, capital of the Awadh State that declared its independence in 1819 from the Mughal Empire. Its beginning in Lucknow was dependent on a compromise between "high Awadh secular officials [who] probably wanted the prayers as the symbols of regional autonomy and the foreign Usûlî ulema [who] promoted them because they believed them religiously necessary, and as part of their clericalist ideology."

instead of the Sultan's name with which, the document claims, they had been accustomed to for decades, they then became gloomy and anxious, leaving the prayer before it actually began and dispersed.[54] Undoubtedly, the document reflects the perception and the political position of the Ottomans; however, it is important to see that the Friday *Khutbes* had been one of the traditional grounds for struggle between Ottoman and Iranian rulers.

2.4 The Ottoman Reacquisition Policy in Atabat

Following the establishment of a firm authority in the Iraqi region in the midst of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman authorities preserved some *vakf*s while abolishing others. On the one hand, for instance, they abolished Musa al-Kadhim *vakf* asserting, "Nonce the Kızılbaş *vakf* is not legitimate." (*şimdiki halde Kızılbaş vakfı meşru' değildir*). However, the Ottoman authorities compensated the expenditures, which were previously paid by the *vakf*, from the treasury of Baghdad. On the other hand, they preserved the *vakf* dedicated for the expenditures of the Shrine of Imam Zeyn al'Abidin. The Ottomans also presumably reestablished some Sunni *vakf*s, which were abolished during the period of Safavids.[55]

In the nineteenth century, the ban on foreign possession of lands primarily targeted the acquisitions of the disputed bordering regions between the Ottomans and the Iranians. However, the scope of the ban covered the Iraqi region as a whole since there were historical claims by Iranians over southern Iraq, particularly over Atabat, where the Shi'i shrines were the potential source of legitimacy for both the internal and external politics of the Persian Empire. Therefore, the Ottomans remarkably

[54] BOA A.MKT.UM 124/22, 19/R/1269 (29 January 1853) From Constantinople to Muhammad Munib Pasha, Kaimmakam-ı Süleymaniye.

[55] Yusuf Sarınay, *111 Numaralı Kerkük Livası Mufassal Tahrîr Defteri (Kanunî Devri)*, (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Dair Başkanlığı Yayın Nu: 64, 2003), 31.

observed the changes in private land ownership and new acquisition of lands and properties in Baghdad. Their primary target was first the people of Iranian origin and then the Ottoman authorities became interested in the acquisitions of the British subjects as well.

It was ordered by the central government that the subjects of a foreign country who had property or land in Baghdad should sell their estates to the Ottoman Empire; then their legal positions should be reinstated as tenants or guests in the country. Later, the local authority was warned by the central government "not to act contrary to the order of the state" (*nizâm-ı mülke muhâlif hareket itmemek*)[56]. According to the Ottomans, the possession of lands by foreigners was incompatible with the rules (*şerâit-i ahîdiyye*). Iranians were Muslims but considered as foreigners. This order was deemed to include not only the Persian commoners living for decades in Baghdad but also the Persian princes who were buying new properties and constructing new buildings.[57] The Ottoman central government applied a lenient but insistent policy to reacquire the estates of foreigners gradually in a peaceful and contractual manner.

Indeed, the central authority did not regard the Iranian princes as equal with the other foreigners and advised to treat them in a more pleasant manner. In addition, there were many Persian subjects whose sons inherited their properties who had inhabited the Ottoman lands for more than fifty years. The government realized the intention and willingness of the Iranian subjects to change their citizenship to Ottoman, thus the government remained silent on the issue.[58] In the following decades, the Ottoman authorities closely monitored the property ownership status. When the Foreign Ministry appointed translators to different parts of the region in

[56] BOA A.AMD 2/61, 26/Z/1263 (4 December 1847).
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.

order to categorize the subjects and meet the needs of land registration, they paid special attention to the status of Iranian subjects residing in Karbala. In other words, they scrutinized the Iranian cases since they were considered important matters (*mevâd-ı mu'tenâ bihâdan*).[59]

Ottoman documents illustrate the unwillingness of the local officials to allow foreigners, whether Iranian or from other origins, to repair their houses without permission. It was thought by the Ottoman authorities that "the repair issue" might have resulted from implementing the ban on the land reacquisition of foreigners in Iraq. Although the primary concern of the government was the people of Iranian origin, it would have been a double standard to allow other foreigners, but not the Iranians, to repair their houses. Therefore, the Ottoman authorities reiterated the old ban over all the foreigners on taking the possession of lands and estates in Iraq; however, they were permitted to repair their houses having valid licenses. Ottomans principally emphasized the prevention of *seizures* of new lands by the people of Iranian origin, and then sought the *recovery* of the already possessed properties by Iranians legally by buying their property whenever they decided to sell.[60]

Nearly a decade later, the Ottomans realized during the midst of the nineteenth century that people of Iranian origin had bought a considerable amount of private lands and estates in Iraq. In addition, the majority of the inhabitants living in that region were Shi'is, whether of Ottoman, Iranian, or Indian origins, who might have been influenced by the Iranian government's traditional wish to declare a protectorate or to directly take the Shi'is as their subjects. Hence, the central Ottoman authorities decided to entrust the former president of *Manastır Meclis-i Muvakkat* Ahmet Rasim Efendi with registering lands and distinguishing subjects.

[59] BOA DH.MKT 1492/79, 23/C/1305 (6 March 1888) To the Ministry of the Imperial Record of the Crown-lands (*Defter-i Hâkân-i Nezâret-i Celîlesi*).
[60] BOA A.AMD 50/58, 25/R/1270 (22 January 1854)

However, before that, because of the correspondence with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the local authority was advised to prevent the *new* purchases by the people of Iranian origin and to look for the ways of *legally* securing these lands, which were in the hands of Iranians for the time being. The legal way of securing these lands would be that when an Iranian who had estates in Iraq died, his property would be sold; and they should not allow the Iranians to buy the property in order to let the Sunni subjects of Ottoman origin make the purchase.[61] This measure slightly affected the Shi'is Ottoman subjects but rather targeted the people of Iranian origin.

Ottoman officials working in Iraq would be accused sometimes of treason due to their connection and affinity to Iran. Since the policy on the absolute territorial control of Iraq became generally accepted after the 1850s, subsequently it had become a new argument and a widely used discourse for their dismissals. Kırlı Efendi, the Kaimmakam of Karbala around 1860, is a significant example. He was accused for his closeness and sympathy towards Iran, selling the estates to the Iranians. However, after some brief scrutiny, the central government realized that this accusation was a baseless claim. Although the allegations against him proved groundless, the government did not refrain from warning Kırlı Efendi to be careful about the issue.[62]

In an official report, it is seen that the rules of the 1867 law, which had also granted foreigners the right to hold real property, were clearly hesitated and possibly not applied in the following decades. Mr. Lyle, for instance, stated:

> [As a] manager and partner in the firm of Messrs Gray Mackenzie &Co applied to the Tapoo Office to register a mortgage in respect of some land in the Robat creek near Basra, on which he was advancing money. The Mudir of the Tapoo Department stated that orders had been received not to register any

[61] BOA A.MKT.UM 408/14, 12/Za/1276 (1 June 1860) From Constantinople to Vali of Baghdad.
[62] BOA A.MKT.UM 427/19, 1/Ra/1277 (16 September 1860). From Constantinople to Vali of Baghdad.

> mortgage in the name of a foreigner and not to transfer any land to foreigners.[63]

J. Ramsay, the British Consular at Basra, could not solve the issue and transferred it to Constantinople.

However, the Ottoman authorities were not always strict concerning the new "construction projects" by foreigners in the Iraqi region. They sometimes oscillated between the two opinions of allowing them to build new houses and consequently improve the conditions of the city or of not allowing them due to a fear of the growing Iranian influence. The Ottomans maintained that the importance of Shrines in Iraq for the Iranian and Indian Shi'is was similar to their respect shown for the *Hijaz*. Therefore, the rich people among the Indians and Iranians always wished to buy estates and lands to turn these properties into a v*akf* (charitable foundation) in order to improve the conditions of the wrecked quarters. Nevertheless, the rule concerning the ban both deprived them of performing such meritorious acts and caused the continuation of poverty in the region. Thus, the Vali of Baghdad proposed to the central government the following exceptional clause, to allow these foreign beneficiaries to construct buildings only under certain conditions. The state and condition of any buildings to be constructed, based upon the aforementioned purpose, needed to be reported to the *Meclîs-i Kebîr* of Baghdad. If approved, an official report certifying the conditions would be attached to the *vakfiyye*. Then the construction would have begun under the supervision of a government official.[64] Herewithal, both the beneficiaries would not be disappointed and the wrecked quarters would become more prosperous.

[63] FO 195/2242 Document No: 19, (8 March 1907). From J. Ramsay, The British Consular at Basra to H.E.R.O'Conor, British Ambassador at Constantinople.

[64] BOA A.MKT.UM 514/95, 6/Ca/1278 (8 October 1861) From Muhammad Sayyid, the Vali of Baghdad and the Marshal of the Imperial Army in Iraq and Hijaz to Constantinople.

The Shi'i Question came to occupy an important place in the Ottoman bureaucratic mentality that sometimes it led to misinterpretations of actual events. For instance, in 1894, the Ottoman central government was informed that a considerable number of Sunni people living along the Iranian border were migrating to Iran. The Ottomans presumed that this undesirable situation was the result of Iranian policies that aimed to break the Ottoman influence over the region by spreading Shi'ism. Then, an investigation began by the decision of *Meclis-i Mahsus-u Vükela* on 17 June 1894, to find out the reasons behind these movements and to decide what kind of precautions were necessary. Moreover, the local administrator of other boundary provinces such as Erzurum, Van, Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra were asked about the same issue. The result of the investigation showed that such movements across the two sides of the Ottoman-Iranian border were customary. There were two reasons for these movements: first, tribal conflicts; and second, the routine movements for summer pastures and winter shelters. Hence, although these people left their hometowns, they returned after a while. The case was also true for the migratory inhabitants of Amara who were already Shi'is. Moreover, they had no relation with the Iranian government unless the Iranian government wanted to keep them in its borders for economic reasons through offering exemption from taxes etc.[65] This example clearly shows how the preconditioned Ottoman bureaucratic mentality misperceived an actual situation.

It has been argued here that the inevitable geographical proximity provided for both the Ottoman and Persian Empires to be natural enemies and eternal friends. Iran, being the political defender of Shi'ism, was perceived by the Ottomans as one of the most central figures in the political debate over Iraq, posing imminent threats

[65] BOA, DH.MKT, 262/13, 14/M/1312 (17 June 1894) From the Ottoman Consulate at Tehran to the Sublime Porte.

to the Ottoman domination and interests in the Iraqi region. Throughout the long history, the Ottomans established a bureaucratic mentality of enduring conflict with Iran as long as they perceived the Shi'is of Iraq being connected to the ambitions of the Iranian governments along with the British after the second half of the nineteenth century. Hence, until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman authorities did not have another agenda for this area apart from reinstating the state authority over the Iraqi region by preventing possible Iranian plans, attacks, or intrigues. While the Ottomans were taking measures against the acquisition of lands by the people who were Iranian subjects, they were only thinking about preventing the Iranian political penetration into Iraq and did not seriously regard Shi'ism as an independent question until the 1870s. In other words, the Shi'i Question began to emerge as a serious problem on the Ottoman state agenda during the reign of Abdülhamid II who developed a modern systematic policy to integrate the people living within the official borders of the Empire around the single ideology of Sunni Islam. Thus, the official perception of Shi'ism noticeably changed and thereafter the Shi'i presence in Iraq acquired a different meaning.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL DISCUSSIONS ON 'THE SPREAD OF SHI'ISM' AND THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE IRAQI REGION IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

An important publication by Yitzhak Naqash[66] has given a new inclination to the historiography on the Shi'is of Iraq whereas Meir Litvak's book[67] slightly broadened the scope of what Naqash argued. Their works were specifically about the history of the Shi'i people residing primarily in and around Baghdad and the Basra provinces of Ottoman Iraq through the nineteenth towards the twentieth centuries. The basic assessment in both books was that due to the Ottoman attempts at centralization, the nomadic tribal population of Iraq largely became settled through the nineteenth century. This meant a change in the traditional social fabric of Iraqi society that consequently disentangled the nomadic tribal identity. Hence, nomadic people inevitably needed a new identity, a new type of binding to replace the former identity marker and to restore the sense of belonging. The concurrent rise of Shi'ism accidentally served as the vehicle providing them with a new identity. Thus, Shi'ism

[66] Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).
[67] Meir Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth Century Iraq*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998).

spread very rapidly due to this sociological transformation.[68] In this chapter, elaborating upon examples that verify the above-mentioned assumption, the premise will first be discussed in detail; then its validity will be questioned. Therefore, the social structure of the Iraqi region in the late nineteenth century and its possible relation to the supposed spread of Shi'ism will be analyzed throughout the chapter.

According to this compact assumption, there emerged a dynamism and synergy amongst the population of Iraq, including both the nomadic and the settled, through intersecting historical events. The Wahhabi pressure, setting in motion the migrations of large tribal confederations such as the Shammar Jarba and the 'Anaze, towards Syria and Iraq between 1791 and 1805, changed the tribal map of Iraq.[69] The Hindiyya Canal, beginning one-hour's distance from the south of Musayyib on the Euphrates River running two hundred kilometers parallel to the river and again joining it near Semawa, was opened up at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Thus, "it gave a great push to socio-economic welfare of Najaf; it provided the water needed to sustain massive numbers of pilgrims and helped the city's mujtahids to establish Najaf as the major Shi'i academic center from the 1840s."[70] In relation to these factors, another historical event took place, which was the prominence of *Usûlism* at the expense of *Akhbari* interpretation of Shi'i jurisprudence and the subsequent rise of the mujtahids, mu'mins, and akhunds as the visible agents of the spread of Shi'ism. In addition, water supply gave the Ottoman government an opportunity to settle the nomadic population in the region through compromising with or coercing them into agricultural production. Together these historical occurrences precipitated the forthcoming Ottoman reforms for centralization; settlement, thus, became the visible cause of the historical change.

[68] Naqash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, 3-55.
[69] Ibid, 26.
[70] Ibid, 19-20.

The settlement policy, which was perceived as the backbone of this sociological transformation, brought about some structural problems such as the appropriate share of water for the irrigation and the just distribution of lands among the tribes and their tribesmen. The confusion due to the relative settlement and consequently partial disentanglement of the previous social structure led to the formation of intermediary groups of people called as *sirkal*s and *sayyid*s. They had various functions within this structure. Among them, the economic one was crucial. Naqash stated:

> The shaykhs, and those city dwellers who were holders of title deeds, needed sirkals to extract their share of revenue from the tribesmen to whom they had granted their pieces of land for cultivation. The sirkals were thus brokers whose main role was to keep the land under cultivation and to collect revenues for the landowner.[71]

On the other hand, *sayyids* fulfilled many religious services. During the post of Namiq Pasha, some of the *sayyids* were given lands to cultivate. Thus, these lands attracted tribesmen from various locations and put them under the service of the *sayyids*. This facilitated the formation of alternative identities, thus altering the tribal forms of identification. "The Sayyids gave sanctions to weddings, circumcisions, funerals and other celebrations."[72] This, in turn, increased their power to propagate Shi'i Islam.

Indeed, the settlement policy had been carried out since the very beginnings of the Ottoman Empire.[73] However, the practice in the nineteenth century was becoming stricter due to the increasing territorial losses in the second half of the nineteenth century that set in motion the immigration of great numbers of refugees

[71] Ibid, 37-41.
[72] Ibid, 37-41.
[73] See for instance, Ömer Lütfi Barkan, "Les Déportations comme méthode de peuplement et de colonisation dans l'Empire Ottoman," *Revue de la Faculté des Sciences Économiques de l'Université d'Istanbul*, 11(1–4):67–131 (October 1949–July 1950); Halil İnalcık, "Türkler ve Balkanlar," in *Balkanlar*, (İstanbul : OBİV Yayınları, 1993).

from the Balkan and Caucasus regions. Following the devastating wars with Russia and Egypt, Ottoman authorities began a centralizing policy. To this end, one of their objectives was to take control of the rebelling Kurd leaders in the eastern Anatolia and northern Iraq. To a certain extent, the Ottoman campaigns yielded efficient results. Thus, "by the middle of the century, there were no emirates left in Kurdistan."[74] However, the direct rule of the Ottoman government could not be firmly established, with the exception of maintaining limited control in the cities. Alongside the resettlement of Christian populations in the Syrian region, there were Circassians, Türkmens, and Chechens amongst the immigrating colonies and certain portions of which were settled in the "Syrian periphery."[75] The main purposes of the Ottoman government in settling the immigrants and the nomads were to establish central governance, to have a firmer control over the population for the sake of increasing the treasury income, to provide a ready supply of men to the army, and to streamline the administration for facilitating better control of the territory. Thus, "the expansion of the settlement in the nineteenth century [became] a universal phenomenon characterized by the emigration of settlers, expansion of settlers, expansion of agriculture and trade, and the rise of powerful nation states."[76]

The bureaucratic mentality of the Hamidian regime, though it owed much to the personality of Abdülhamid II, had been gradually shaped through extensive Tanzimat reforms. The standardization of the Ottoman administration, the expansion of a modern school system, introduction of the new land code in 1858, and the Provincial Reform Law in 1864 all served to regulate the power of the local elites

[74] Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 175-76.
[75] Eugene L. Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire Transjordan, 1850-1921*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 72-82.
[76] Meltem Toksöz, *Nomads and Migrants: The Making of an Eastern Meditarrenean Region in the Ottoman Empire, 1850-1908*, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation at Boğaziçi University, June 2006, 39.

and interest groups while strengthening the infrastructural power of the Ottoman state. Thus, the central government extended its authority beyond the urban centers towards the rural areas, as in the case of "the pastoralists and peasants of Transjordan were incorporated to Ottoman rule through the instruments of the Tanzimat state."[77]

Tanzimat reforms aimed to settle all the tribes around their winter shelters. Tribal members were given economic benefits such as being exempted from taxes.[78] It was argued by Halaçoğlu that, as a result of the century-old efforts, the settlement policy in Anatolia began to pan out around 1860s. In the following decades, new villages were established for those settled tribes.[79] The Jaff tribe, for instance, whose members were Sunni, came to terms with the Ottoman government to settle at their winter shelters.[80] The Ottoman authorities used some coercive methods as well in settlement efforts. In 1893, approximately 500 households belonging to the Hamawand tribe, for instance, were forcefully exiled to different parts of the empire such as Mardin, Hakkari, Sivas, Konya, Adana, and Mosul.[81]

The Ottoman administration deliberately favored the new intermediary groups, namely the shaykhs, in order to provide both the subservience of the "independent" tribes to the state and to put an end to the conflicts among them. To this end, the Ottoman officials awarded decorations and distributed robes of honor to the shaykhs whose respect was considerably high.[82] Hanna Batatu stated:

> Shaykhly leadership, in other terms, was a military leadership clearly differentiated and increasingly hereditary, but in its first stages patriarchal in its essence and with few of the earmarks of a class position, and only began to

[77] Eugene L. Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire Transjordan,* 2-6.
[78] Sinan Marufoğlu, *Osmanlı Döneminde Kuzay Irak*, 1831-1914, (İstanbul: Eren Yay, 1998), 177-82.
[79] Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *XVIII. Yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun İskan Siyaseti ve Aşiretlerin Yerleştirilmesi,* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1997), 8.
[80] Ibid, 125-26.
[81] Marufoğlu, *Osmanlı Döneminde Kuzay Irak,* 170.
[82] Nadir Özbek, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Sosyal Devlet: Siyaset, İktidar ve Muşruiyet 1976-1914*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), 117-31. See also Mert Sunar, *Tribes and State: Ottoman Centralization in Eastern Anatolia, 1876-1914* Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Bilkent University, 1999, 38-47.

> take the latter form as the once free-living tribe became more intimately bound to the land.[83]

The shaykh, in the political framework of the late nineteenth century Iraq, did not solely mean a religious person with his disciples, but rather a political person entering into power relations, committing crimes, taking revenge, and replacing the position of former *mir*s and *emir*s.[84] In this context, the case of the Shaykh of the Mas'ûd Tribe presents a striking example in providing a clear understanding of the position of the shaykhs and their relations with their tribes in the late nineteenth century Iraq. The Shaykh was insulted by a young impudent boy belonging to a different tribe. The boy accused the shaykh of stealing his sheep. Afterwards, the shaykh immediately returned to his place feeling disgruntled. As such, he instigated his tribe to occupy the place where that boy was living. He succeeded in doing so. They occupied the road, plundered some boats on the canal, and carried away a number of the sheep of that boy in order to get the revenge of the shaykh. The officials could only intervene three or four days later. Somehow, they sent the instigator shaykh to prison, however, with fear that his tribe may rise against this imprisonment. Hence, they set him free three days later and escorted by five men while leaving Baghdad.[85]

The relation between the local intermediaries and the state was not a peaceful cohabitation at all. Hüseyin bin Ferid, a major, satirically complained about the political circumstances in the region, informing the central government about the power of the local agents. He reported that shaykhs were carrying Martini rifles and

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[83] Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of its Communists, Ba'thists and Free Officers*, (London: Saqi Books, 2004), 64.

[84] See Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 63-80; and see for the Kurdish historical context Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: The Political and Social Structures of Kurdistan*, (London, New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1992), 50-53 and 73-81.

[85] FO 195/2116 Doc No: 304/34, (1st Aug. 1902). From L.S. … to Nicholas R. O'Conor.

its ammunition instead of *misvak*[86] and *tesbih*; stealing from the poor by using guns; corrupting the revenues of the state; and, in general, rebelling against the government. He particularly highlighted two major problems from which the Iraqi region was suffering: first, the position of the tribal chieftains in the existing social structure as composed of tribes, which were able to obtain guns from the docked ships visiting the Basra Gulf; and second, Shi'i disciples of shaykhs who constantly fought with each other representing the struglles between different shaykhs. The latter one could engulf the tribes. In addition, there were corruptions in the tribal confederations that led the chieftains to build new alliances which tightened the government control. Possible contacts of these shaiyks with the agencies of the Iranian government were among the foremost fears of the Ottoman administrators.[87]

Establishing security forces to implement the administrative reforms of the central government was a modern practice that was also adopted by the Ottoman governors to extend the regulations of the state to remote provinces to which "security and order" were promised. Thus, "during the Tanzimat period, the first act of an Ottoman governor, before introducing administrative reform, was to establish a gendarmerie regiment or company in that province. Other branches of government followed."[88] Although the Adana region is beyond the main focus of this study, the activities of *Fırka-i Islahiyye* set a good example of demonstrating the willingness of the Ottoman government to populate certain places that they wanted by purging new settlements. After the Crimean War (1853-1856), *Fırka-i Islahiyye* was established to

[86] It is described in the dictionary as "a stick of wood beaten into fibers at one end and used as a toothbrush." W. James Redhouse, *Turkish and English Lexicon*, [first edition published in 1890] Second Edition. (Istanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 2001), 1859.
[87] BOA, Y.PRK.EŞA 33/92, 1311 (1894).
[88] Nadir Özbek, "Policing the Countryside: Gendarmes of the Late 19th-Century Ottoman Empire (1876-1908)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 40, (February, 2008), 48-49.

end the local authority of the tribes and bandits around the highlands of Adana.[89] Places from Payas to Kilis and from Beylan to Maraş were in a state of rebellion. Villages around Kilis were under the rule of a nomad named Deli Halil. During this process, the Ottoman administrators were entering into tribal power relations to obtain their subservience, benefiting from the opportunities given by internal political rivalries and cooperation between tribes. Thus, assessing that the place would be safer for the Ottoman troops, which were going to subsume their military movements, the commander of the *Fırka-i Islahiyye* demanded the establishment of a village around a *derbend* between *Kürt Dağı* and *Gavur-Dağı* and asked the chieftain of *Hacılar Nahiyesi* to bring about thirty houses in order to settle them down around the *derbend*.[90] Similarly, for the security reasons they combined three *nahiye*s to create a new *kaza*. They established military barracks there and generated a town comprised of a hundred households. They named it *Hassa Kazası* because first the *Hassa* armies had stepped in. In the following days, three or four small *nahiye*s were combined and certain numbers of people belonging to the tribes were drawn towards this new *kaza*.[91]

The coercion of the state was not the exclusive reason behind the settlement of the tribes. Some tribes decided to settle by themselves because of the physical conditions,[92] some others settled due to economic reasons. The transformation from a nomadic to a settled life in the *Çukurova* region was gradual in manner. Nomadic tribes first became semi-nomadic then became sedentarized. The basic underlying reason for this shift was the economic factors, which slowly changed the social

[89] Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, *Maruzat*, (Istanbul: Çağrı Yay, 1980), 125-26.
[90] Ibid, 129-34.
[91] Ibid, 137-41.
[92] Cengiz Orhonlu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Aşiretlerin İskanı*, (İstanbul: Eren, 1987), 36-39.

structure, instead of the actions of the state.[93] The Bedouin Khazal tribe, for instance, was ostensibly going to Karbala to buy their main necessities and some simple luxuries. The reason was that they were slowly drawn into the Bombay horse-market since they were "as keen horse-sellers as Yorkshiremen themselves."[94] Plowden, the British Council General at Baghdad, believed that the desire of the Sublime Porte to settle the nomads such as the Anaze could be realized through "a long intermediate stage" just as "many of the clans of the Scottish highlands" passed through.[95]

Naqash underscored the effects of the settlement dynamic upon the tribal affiliations by noting that, "this settlement fragmented the old tribal confederations, and altered the balance between the nomadic and sedentarized groups, and increased agricultural production and trade in southern Iraq."[96] In the light of all these developments and changes in the social structure, it was argued by the historiography that the Shi'is of Iraq began to obtain power. There emerged new figures such as Shi'i notables and elites. Mujtahids and particularly *akhunds* began to visit the recently settled nomads and function as judicial arbitrators amongst them. Hence, the settled tribesmen acquired a common identity through Shi'ism.

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[93] Toksöz, *Nomads and Migrants*, 36-42. In Eastern Anatolia around Çukurova, for instance, when examining at the registers concerning the names of the lately established villages by the nomadic people, it seems clear that they are the names reflecting the important images of the nomadic life-style.

[94] FO 195/1409, Document No: 33, (1 November 1882). From Trevor Chichele Plowden, the British Council General at Baghdad to the British Ambassador at Constantinople.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Naqash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, 4-5. Naqash references to M.S. Hasan who gives certain numbers about the changes in the Iraqi population between the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentirth. Depending on Hasan, Naqash states that "the population estimates for Iraq demonstrate the scope of this process of settlement and its impact on the social composition of southern and central Iraq. Whereas in 1867 the percentage of nomadic and rural elements of the population of the southern Iraq was 50 and 41 percent, by 1905 this changed to 19 and 72 percent, respectively. Similarly, in central Iraq, this ratio changed from 23 and 39 percent to 7 and 78 percent, respectively." Naqash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, 35. See also M.S. Hasan, "Growth and Structure of Iraq's Population, 1867-1947," Bulletin of the Oxford University, Institute of Economic and Statistics 20 (1958): 339-52.

However, this scheme, which was utilized to explain the nature of Shi'i expansion, should be questioned. Two important aspects of the argument seem to be very much oversimplified. First, the question concerning the success of the settlement policy is very dubious. Indeed, the documents both at the Ottoman Prime Ministry and at the British National Archives demonstrate that the Ottomans were still heavily engaging in the tribal question at the beginning of the twentieth century. In addition, British agencies were always seeking ways to gain the political support and loyalty of the tribal chieftains. Moreover, there are thousands of documents demonstrating that the overwhelming political problems in Iraq were related to the ongoing tribal warfare, which was not only between tribes and the state but also among the tribes themselves. Second, if the settlement policy did not have enormous influence in reshaping the social structure of the region, then how could this disentanglement have consequently led to the spread of Shi'ism, which was thought to have benefited from such a change and to have given a new identity to those still nomadic or at least semi- nomadic tribes?

Contrary to the first assumption, which asserted that the settlement brought successful results throughout the nineteenth century, the social structure of the Iraqi region did not follow a path of steady change. Conversely, there was an ongoing antagonism between the state and the tribes because of the centralization. The fierce necessity of reforming the tribal structure had emerged for the state as a stipulation to provide agricultural production and consequently to increase the state revenues through taxation; to expand the state authority against foreign encroachments; and to provide man-power for the army. According to the socio-political circumstances of

late nineteenth century Iraq, the primary concern of the Ottoman government was to cope with the disorder caused by tribes regardless of their sectarian affiliations.[97]

The tribal structures in the three Iraqi provinces were different from each other. The case in Mosul showed that the tribal confederations and shaykhhs benefited from the vacuum of power and kept their autonomous or semi-autonomous positions. The case in Baghdad was much more stable since the Tanzimat reforms achieved much more efficient results in establishing central governance. In Basra, there were two vast areas, Muntafiq and Amara, ruled by large tribal confederations such as the Muntafiq, Beni Lam, Beni Asad, and Albu Muhammad.[98]

If it was not disrupted suddenly by government efforts, there was a symbiotic relationship between the nomads and the settlers based on the exchange of goods and products provided a socio-economic dynamism for nomads to maintain their presence.[99] Nomads continued their customary seasonal movements. Around the 1850s, the members of the ‘Anaze tribe were annually visiting the settled areas to sell their animal products. In return, they were buying foodstuff and clothes. When the government wanted to punish them, they stopped their trade with the settled population.[100] Towards the end of the 1890s, the Arab tribes of Jabal Shammar were customarily visiting Najaf, Karbala, and other places “for the purpose of purchasing their annual supply of provisions.”[101] It is clear that the tribes were still benefiting from this trade in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Therefore, the symbiotic lifestyle and cohabitation between the settled and the nomads enabled nomadism to reproduce and continue itself.

[97] FO 195/2340, Doc No: 878/51, (12 September 1910)
[98] Gökhan Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890-1908*, 73-97.
[99] Toksöz, *Nomads and Migrants*, 14.
[100] Marufoğlu, *Osmanlı Döneminde Kuzay Irak*,171.
[101] FO 195/2020, Doc No: 214/30, (11 May 1898).

Having lived through the formative years of the modern Iraqi state, Longrigg wrote about the 1910s stating that "the Sadun [tribe] grew ever weaker, the Shammar as divided; their settlement was a failure. Shipping still suffered from the riverain tribes; the Hamawand still laughed at government in Bazyan."[102] It was the year in which Nazim Pasha was the governor of the three provinces of Iraq and the commander of the Sixth Army Corps. As the chief personality of the time in Iraq, the Pasha faced the serious difficulty of tribes withholding their taxes, and it was anticipated that the government would eventually have to coerce them to pay.[103]

The Jaff tribe was described in 1911 by the British Vice-Council C.A. Greic as a "powerful, semi-nomadic, and frontier tribe."[104] İsmail Hakkı Bey, Deputy for Baghdad, delivered a speech before the CUP (Committee of Union and Progress) in Baghdad in 1910. After stressing the importance of the education for the people of the province, he stated, "the nomadic tribes should be settled on the land and more attention should be given to agriculture."[105] Similarly, there is a British document, dating back to September 1910, which illustrates that "none [soldiers], I think could be safely drawn from the Kirkuk Division as the Baraizani Shaykh and the Hamawand, Shammar and the Dialiam [Deylem] tribes in the Mousul Wilayet, though settlement have been patched up with some of them, are still unsubdued."[106] The mentioned tribes in this document were the most powerful and the most populous tribes in the region. The document provides the sense that the Ottoman centralization policy had not been that successful in a practical manner.

Due to the inefficiency of the Ottoman Gendarmerie at Basra, robberies were frequent in the 1870s. Indeed, the British officials attributed the prevailing insecurity

[102] Stephen H. Longringg, *Four Centruies of Modern Iraq*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1925), 321.
[103] FO 195/2341, Doc No: 1011/61, (17 November 1910).
[104] FO 195/2368, Doc No: 19, (14 April 1911).
[105] FO 195/2341, Doc No: 1085/67, (5 December 1910).
[106] FO 195/2340, Doc No: 878/51, (12 September 1910).

of the town to the incompetence of the Ottoman Gendarmerie. In addition to the unrest caused by the tribal/nomadic population, it was worthy to note that, "the semi-disaffected state of the settled Arabs which cause them to harbor and abet"[107] was a factor contributing to the insecurity of the region. Moreover, the powerful tribes were able to control certain territories at the expense of the Ottoman provincial government in the early twentieth century. It was stated by the British Residency that:

> The Arabs of the Euphrates valley, it must be remembered, [were] numbered by tens of thousands and [were] well armed; their weakness [was] their incapacity to act together or to collect from beyond more than a certain radius. They know the country well, while the Turks would, I believe, have difficulty in finding their way about and in getting reliable information.[108]

For instance, the Mas'ood tribe, an Arab tribe, had occupied both sides of the Husayniyah Canal between Karbala and Musayyib for sometime.[109] It was thought that in a possible war between the Ottoman army and tribes, as observed by a British representative, it would be very difficult to guess who would be victorious, the Ottoman armed forces, or the well-organized tribal groups.

The attempts of the Ottoman government in the beginning of the nineteenth century to establish a central authority over the Jabal Sinjar improved the public security and provided the security of the caravan routes; however, it achieved little success until "the 1837 military expedition of Hafiz Pasha, the governor of Diyar Bekr."[110] The representative of the British Consulate, M. Robertson argued:

> They [the Ottomans] state that in addition to the losses they have suffered from their property being plundered by the Arab tribes their trade is rushed by the general insecurity and absence of enforcement. They [Ottomans] consider that the security can only be restored by the appointment of a governor of Hijd who will be respected and feared as an individual, meaning Samir Pasha.

[107] FO 602/40, Doc No: 345, (21 November 1879). From M. Robertson to S.B. Miles.
[108] FO 195/2340, Doc No: 878/51, (12 September 1910).
[109] FO 195/2116, Doc No: 304/34, (1August 1902). From L.S. … to Nicholas R. O'Conor.
[110] Nelida Fuccaro, *The Other Kurds: Yezidis in Colonial Iraq*, (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 1999), 32.

> They don't believe that more than are already at Khalef and Hasan would be of any use as the troops can only held certain points while the plundering Bedouins cause and go at pressure, and when pressured retreat to the desert where pursuit is impossible.[111]

Similarly, it was a general problem as stated by Isa Blumi that:

> The Ottoman Empire was failed not only by its enemies but also by its own understaffed and frequently disloyal bureaucracy, its hold on Northern Albania and Yemen significantly drained its limited resources. The level of smuggling taking place beyond the control of Istanbul fuelled political and social forces that turned the regions into zones of war and then territorial conquests for the neighboring nation-states and their mafia-like allies.[112]

As seen from the above-mentioned examples, the local power groups opposed the demands of the central government declared by the Gülhane Edict in 1839 and thus began to be more vigilant. Some of these local notables rebelled against the Ottoman government. Hence, the government faced the problem of implementing and executing this program.[113] Thus, the Ottoman government generally employed a policy of reforming certain regions instead of coercing a collective settlement. During the Tanzimat period, the main purpose of the central government concerning tribal settlement was to ensure their subservience to the state. A rule put into effect in 1842 aimed to end the move of tribes from one place to another for summer pastures or winter shelters. The regulation aimed to persuade the members of the tribes to remain where they were. They were given lands on the condition that they would engaged in agricultural activity. Officially, the post of *şeyhlik* was transformed into *kaymakamlık* or *mutasarrıflık*. Namely, the shaykhs of tribes were officially turned into *kaymakam*s or *mutasarrıf*s. [114]

The nomadic tribal structure was the major social reality of the region and determined the mode of regional policy. The Ottomans, just as the Romans and the

[111] FO 602/40, Doc No: 39, (9 February 1879). From M. Robertson to J.P. Nixon.
[112] Isa Blumi, "Thwarting the Ottoman Empire," 273.
[113] Mert Sunar, *Tribes and the State*, 19-28.
[114] Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *XVIII. Yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun İskan Siyaseti ve Aşiretlerin Yerleştirilmesi*, (Ankara: TTK Basımevi, 1988), 7.

Safavids, had used the tool of making alliances with the border-people who were mostly Kurds in the north and Bedouin Arabs in the south inhabiting both sides of the Zagros Mountain in keeping the security of the borders.[115] Similarly, the mountainous character of the geographical landscapes imposed the necessity of establishing political alliances or relying on the tribal population over northern Albania along the Ottoman-Montenegrin border as well as the blurry transitional zones of the Ottoman-Iranian border where nomadic Bedouins lived.[116] The implementation of the 1864 Provincial Reform Law in Libya and in the eastern frontiers of the Ottoman Empire sets a good example for this. The implementation of the law in Libya was much more successful when compared with the "Kurdish or Arabian frontiers."[117]

It was a governmental practice in the late nineteenth century that "a modern body politics that was bound together not only by the coercive powers of the central government but also by a network of social alliances and a shared sense of identity."[118] These political alliances were lenient in application and, thus, carried a benign nature. However, the ad-hoc alliances with other local tribes gave these tribes the opportunity to act freely in their localities, including plundering and looting of other tribes, which were generally their enemy. When the government called on certain tribes for their support, they enjoyed the opportunity to freely act and intervene into the affairs of the city or other tribes.[119] Because of that, the 1868 Land

[115] Rudi Matthee, "The Safavid Ottoman Frontier: Iraq-i Arab As Seen By The Safavids," *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, Vol. 9, (2003), 168. See also C.R. Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Romans Empire: A Social and Economic Study* (Baltimore, 1994).
[116] Maurus Reinkowski, "Double Struggle, No Income: Ottoman Borderlands in Northern Albania," *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, Vol. 9, (2003), 239.
[117] Eugene L. Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire Transjordan*, 17.
[118] Engin Deniz Akarlı, "The Tangled Ends of an Empire: Ottoman Encounters with the West and Problems of Westernization- An Overview," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, Vol. 26, No. 3, (Duke University Press, 2006), 358.
[119] FO 195/1142, Document No: 36, (22 September 1877). From Hyder Ali Khan to Colonel Nixon Sahib.

Law had changed few things in northern Iraq. The old property ownership paradigm did not dissolve the traditional patrimonial relations, but continued in another form. Despite the article of the Law ordering that, "the whole of the land of a village or town cannot be granted in its entirety to all of the inhabitants, nor to one or two of them. Separate pieces are to be given to each inhabitant …" in practice, the lands, which were previously ruled by the local elite, were registered in their names. According to Bruinessen, the implementation of the Law was relatively more successful in the highlands, whereas it gained little success in the lowlands. The vast holdings in southern Iraq, for instance, had been owned by the "chiefs of the Arab tribes."[120] As such, they were not going to relinquish their claims to the land just because of a law being proclaimed.

Stamps were distributed to the chieftains of the tribes by the Valis of the provinces to obtain their subservience. The practice of bestowing the robe of honor (*hil'at*) had been used as an important tool to demonstrate the obedience of the local notables to a higher authority since the early times of Islamic caliphates. Thus, rejecting or taking robes off meant mutiny against the higher authority. Many empires, including the Ottoman, as well as the Chinese and Roman, had adopted this tradition.[121] The practice of enrobing with honorary dress (*hil'at*) and awarding decorations to appease the Bedouins had been applied by the Ottomans during the sixteenth and seventieth centuries to maintain the security of pilgrimage roads towards Mecca and Medina. Through this practice, the Ottoman authorities aimed to achieve both the security of the roads and the articulation of the Bedouin chiefs to "the Ottoman *cursus honorum*."[122] However, the extensive use of them during the

[120] Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 182-85.
[121] M. Fuad Köprülü, "Hil'at" in *İslam Ansiklopedisi* Vol. 5/1 (M.E.B., 1997), 483-86.
[122] Suraiya Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans*, 66-67.

Hamidian regime attracted the attention of the British consular. Because of the plentitude of this *hil'at*, its value had decreased. The British representative noted:

> Two British Indian subjects here named Sujjad Ali Khan and Muhammad Hassan Khan of the Family of Nawab Agha Khan Meer, the Vezier of Ghazi-ud-din Hyder King of Oudh, have lately been presented with medals and sanads by the Turkish government because they contributed money to the Hedjaz Railway. They do not seem to be very proud of them. Many such medals have been distributed here lately and decorations can easily be obtained in this way.[123]

In Syria, in some districts such as Ajlun, the local Ottoman authorities carried out a policy of the systematic registration of lands that began a competition between the settlers and the nomads alike to acquire the possession of these lands. In return, this competition brought about the expansion of cultivated areas. Rogan stated:

> The application of the 1858 Land Law in Transjordan set in process the registration of land and encouraged a market in landed property. Between the threat of confiscation of lands for settlers and the lands which registered title-holders stood to gain from their lands, pastoralists and cultivators came to accept the new Ottoman regime, much to the benefit of local agricultural production and tax revenues.[124]

However, in the Iraqi region, "the principal source of conflicts in the Iraqi provinces, whether between notables or tribes, or between them and the government, was land."[125] The tribes in the region were becoming stronger by obtaining modern weapons through the international arms trade. Henceforth, there appeared serious problems related to tax collection matters.

The share of lands and property illustrates that 80 percent of the cultivated lands were under the control of the Ottoman Empire. "According to Cuinet's estimate, 30 percent of the cultivated land in the Baghdad province belonged to the Sultan, 30 percent to the state (*miri*), 20 percent to the private individuals (*tapu*), and

[123] FO 195/2214, Document No: 230/24, (17 February 1906).
[124] Eugene L. Rogan, *Frontiers of the State*, 18 and 90-92.
[125] Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890-1908*, 149.

20 percent was registred as *waqf*."[126] Consequently, it may be inferred that at the end of the nineteenth century, tribalism constituted the dominant character of the Iraqi society. Therefore, it was a society with a majority of its population, at least 60 percent, being composed of semi-autonomous or relatively sovereign tribal organizations. However, in contrast to this situation, the overwhelming control of property and lands was in the hands of the Ottoman government. Although after the Ottoman conquest of Iraq, the timar system was implemented in Baghdad and a tahrir register was prepared,[127] *de facto* authority could not easily be established. Consequently, the reason behind the disputes between tribal organizations and the state arose from the struggle to share these lands. However, the Ottoman government was eager on distribute lands to the tribes in return for their subservience. Yet, the tribes did not seem willing to abandon their autonomous characters and *de facto* sovereignty to the hands of the state. Therefore, the dispute between these two agents appeared inevitable.

If the settlement policy had not taken place as was claimed, then the tribal identity likely would have continued. Indeed, the continuation of tribal identity for a considerable amount of time is both a sociological necessity and was the practical reality. Bruinessen states, while explaining the power of aghas and shaykhhs and further the possibility of the disentanglement of the firmly established relations between notables and their serf-like tribesmen that "the existence of primordial loyalties and their apparent ubiquity do not preclude the functioning of other loyalties. Conversely, when new loyalties such as those of nation and class emerge,

[126] Gökhan Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq : 1890-1908,* Doctoral Thesis at Manchester University, 1994, 14 ; Cuinet, *La Turquie D'Asie*, III, 44.

[127] Yusuf Sarınay, *111 Numaralı Kerkük Livası Mufassal Tahrîr Defteri (Kanunî Devri)*, (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Dair Başkanlığı Yayın Nu: 64, 2003), 25, There are two *defter*s that contain the results of this enumeration which are BOA, TD 1028 and BOA, TD 1049.

the primordial ones do not suddenly cease to function."[128] In addition to this, Batatu notes that "down to the 1958 revolution and even afterwards tribes-people continued, on the whole, to be governed more by their ancient tribal customs than by the Islamic law as developed and interpreted by the Twelve Shi'i Imams." [129] Keeping in mind the presumption that the historical occurrences should anyhow follow reasonable chronological chains, the tribal customs should have continued their predominance over the tribesmen from the late nineteenth through the twentieth century.

With regard to the discussions on the nature of the spread of Shi'ism, assuming that the settlement of the tribes was a prerequisite for the spread may create a perception contradictory to the historical reality that was very much determined by the ongoing tribal warfare. Indeed, the possibility of conflict seems inherent in a geography where the nomadic life-style was predominant due to the geographical sparseness, the need for migration, and the eventual possibility of confrontation between different nomadic groups. Therefore, it is plausible to claim that the Ottoman centralization policy in the late nineteenth century became stricter due to the increasing political tensions in the international arena, which acutely threatened the Ottoman territorial integrity and due to the unraveling coercive power of the government over its various subjects belonging to different ethnic and religious backgrounds. However, the success of the settlement policy was limited. The influence of the government diminished accordingly as the distance from the center of the empire increased. Thus, local groups enjoyed limited liberties, fiilling the vacuum of power unintentionally left by the dispersed and inefficient armed forces of the empire.

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[128] Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 6.

[129] Hanna Batatu, "Iraq's Underground Shi'i Movements," *MERIP Reports*, No. 102, Islam and Politics. (Jan., 1982), 4-5.

Although it is difficult to assume the resettlement of tribes as a prerequisite for the spread of Shi'ism, there is still a relation with the changes in the social structure of the Iraqi region. There were many other factors fluctuating the tribal moves and interrupting the efforts of the state. Around 1837, for instance, Wahhabi pressure had moved the "Tay and Anaze tribes which had a powerful penchant to cooperate with the state authority and settle down in the environs of Mardin and Baghdad"[130] It is undeniable that the settlement policy had a strong influence over the Iraqi social fabric. Thus, the objective reality of the time was that the centralization policy did not fully settle the nomadic and the tribal population; yet it certainly dislocated many of them.[131] Therefore, one can speculate that the coercive power of the governmental forces dislocated the tribes, causing consolidation of their internal structures. Moreover, the intensifying warfare between tribes of the region may have incited the intra-tribal homogeneity. It was the ground, on which the actual agents of historical change namely *akhunds*, mu'mins, and mujtahids, had played.

Furthermore, "the anti-governmental motive" might have converged with the tribes' drive for independence from any political authority; thus, Shi'ism might have permeated into the worlds of the tribal people by means of a common psychological background. Batatu says, "The anti-governmental motive of Shi'ism, its preoccupation with oppression, its grief-laden tales, and its miracle play representing Husayn's passion, accorded with the instincts and sufferings of the tribes-people-turned peasants and must have eased the tasks of the traveling of Shi'i Mu'mins."[132]

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[130] Cengiz Orhonlu, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Aşiretlerin İskanı*, 113.

[131] I would like to thank to Meir Litvak for reminding me of the possible elongations of the "dislocation" of tribes, which is certain beyond the ambiguous nature of the discussions on the results of settlement policy.

[132] Batatu, "Iraq's Underground Movements," 585; Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of its Communists, Ba'thists and Free Officers*, (London: Saqi Books, 2004), 42.

To sum up, discussions on the nature of the spread of Shi'ism should not disregard the social structure of Iraq, which was very much determined by tribalism. Contrary to the above-mentioned presumption that of the settlement of nomadic populations then the subsequent disentanglement of their identity, which caused these people to adopt the Shi'i identity, it has been argued here that the socio-political reality of the Iraqi social fabric was characterized by ongoing tribal warfare in the second half of the nineteenth century. Although the Ottoman government achieved the settlement of some tribes and some others settled by themselves due to economic reasons or structural factors, it did not mean that the customary and traditional identities completely disappeared. The old affiliations lasted for a considerable length of time. Thus, the question concerning the spread of Shi'ism should not be interpreted as the direct result of the changes in the social structure. Although the dislocation of the tribes and the increasing activities of the Shi'i Mujtahids in the region were undeniably important factors in escalating the Shi'i influence, this sociological phenomenon had some other dimensions that will be discussed from a historical perspective in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

SHI'I PRESENCE AND THE SPREAD OF SHI'ISM IN IRAQ

Prior to the discussions about the spread of Shi'ism, it should be known that the presence of Shi'is in the Iraqi region was a centuries-old phenomenon. It was predominantly attributable to the tragic beginning of the Shi'i history with the martyrs of Hasan and Hüseyin, grandsons of the Prophet Muhammad, and to the presence of holy shrines of the respectable Shi'i Imams in the region. In the course of time, Iraq became a sacred geography for Shi'is and thus developed both into a major center of Shi'i education and into a blessed place for residence and burial. Devout Shi'is, before they passed away, desired their corpses to be buried near the shrines of highly esteemed Shi'i clerics hoping the mercy of God. Therefore, in this chapter, first, the spiritual importance of Iraq as being at the core of the Shi'i pilgrimage or on the road to the pilgrimage, second, the historical practice of the corpse traffic, and third, the demographic map of the Iraqi region will be introduced. The third issue will supposedly give an insight into the social composition of the Iraqi society before entering into the discussions on the nature and the extent of the spread of Shi'ism that will be the fourth, and the focal point of this chapter. As the fourth issue, the spread of Shi'ism will be discussed and be contextualized in the sixth part. The last part is going to present a brief discussion on the nature of the spread of Shi'ism.

4.1 Shi'i Pilgrimage

There are many shrine cities in Iraq. Ali was wounded in Kûfe, but his tomb resided in Najaf. The tomb of Hussein is in Karbala. "Abbas has a sepulcher of his own. The tomb of Hurr is situated seven miles to the north-east, and that of 'Aun 34 miles to the north-west of Karbala."[133] Additionally, there are many other shrines belonging to the historically significant Karbala incident such as the "tomb of the Muslim-bin-'Akil who was Hussein's emissary to Kufe, and [the tomb] of Hasan."[134] Furthermore, not only Shi'is but also other Muslims have paid special attention to these Shi'i shrines. Resembling each other, the cult of saints have become overarching common symbols "among Sunnis, Alevi-Bektashis and even Sufi circles."[135]

Before discussing the Shi'i pilgrimage in particular, the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina was described by a contemporary of the early twentieth century as such:

> Almost the only matter concerning all the Mohammedans of the Persian Gulf alike [was] that of the annual pilgrimages to the Holy cities of Makkah and Medinah. There [were] three principal routes across Arabia by which the pilgrims from the Persian Gulf reach Hijaz; the first runs from Hofuf in Hasa via Riyadh in Southern Najd; the second from Kuwait via Buraidah in Qasim; and the third, from Najaf in Turkish Iraq via Hail in Jabal Shammar. Of these the last, by which pilgrims from Persia generally travel, is the most important and the most regularly used one. [136]

The other routes were preferred in cases of insecurity.

Although the hajj to Mecca was acknowledged by Shi'is amongst the primary religious duties incumbent upon all Muslims, the persons who visited the tombs of Shi'i Imams were entitled as pilgrims (*hajjis*). Shi'i pilgrimage to the Shrines in Iraq came to be one of the main voluntary duties of the Shi'i believers. Both in times of

[133] FO 195/2338, Document No: 97/4, (1910).
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, "Islam in the Ottoman Empire", 186.
[136] FO 195/2338, Document No: 97/4, (1910).

war and in times of peace between Safevids and the Ottomans, the visits, particularly for the shrines of Kerbala and Najaf, were thought to be substitutable for Mecca and Medina.[137] Since Iraq was perceived a sacred geography, it continued its attraction through centuries. Marshall Hodgson noted that "the most precious apotropaic medicine was a tablet made of the clay of Karbala, held to be infinitely impregnated with the sacred blood of Husayn; if it was put under one's pillow, one was, in effect, sleeping at Karbala itself and so under Husayn's protection."[138] According to Ottomans, the importance of shrines in Iraq in the views of the Iranian and Indian Shi'is was similar to the respect shown toward Hijaz (Harameyn-i Şerifeyn).[139]

As for the Shi'i pilgrimage in the late nineteenth century, approximately one-hundred thousand pilgrims from Iran and India were annually visiting the Shrines.[140] The pilgrimages were directly influencing the prosperity of Karbala and Najaf. Because of that, there sometimes emerged harsh competition between the inhabitants of these two Shrines.[141] Ottoman officials were demanding from each pilgrim, who was following the route to Mecca over Khaniqin, approximately 1 tuman, or 50 *kuruş*.[142] W. Tweedy, the British Consul in Baghdad, thought that the Turks were tolerant because they perceived the Shi'i pilgrims who were visiting the Holy Shrines, as a source of income.[143]

Iraq was one of the great pilgrimage roads to Mecca and Medina. Since early times, the Islamic Caliphates, which ruled over the Iraqi region, paid special attention to the improvement of this road. Hence, they tried to find remedies to prevent the bedouin attacks on the pilgrim caravans as well as dotted the caravan routes with

[137] Yitzhak Naqash, *Shi'is of Iraq*, 163 and 179-180.
[138] Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol 3, 38.
[139] BOA, A.MKT.UM 514/95, 6/Ca/1278 (8 November 1861).
[140] Naqash, *Shi'is of Iraq*, 164.
[141] Ibid, 181-83.
[142] BOA, A.DVN.DVE3 16-A/78, 1264 (1848).
[143] FO 195/1409, Document No: 34, (7 November 1882) From W.Tweedy, the British Council General at Baghdad to the British Ambassador at Constantinople.

facilities such as cisterns, milestones, forts, and fire beacons.[144] Pilgrimage to the shrines of Iraq was a dangerous journey even in the beginning of the twentieth century. Constant disputes between tribes were harming and injuring the Shi'i pilgrims. These tribal quarrels were making the pilgrimage more difficult. For instance, even in the early twentieth century, when the control of the government relatively expanded compared to the past decades, there were frequent skirmishes occurring between Anaze tribe and their hostile 'Amir of Jabal' (Ibn Rashid). Shi'i pilgrims were troubled by these unrests on their road to Najaf.[145] Although, at an occasion, a large number of pilgrims of Najaf remained untouched from the tribal conflict emaneted from the feud between Zugurd and Shumurds, [146] the feud continued in a growing manner. Thus, "in the course of disturbances some Persian subjects [were] said to have been killed, the large bazar [was] said to have been looted, and two British subjects [had] been robbed."[147] However, it appears from the official documentation that the Ottoman authorities were aware of the importance of protecting Persian pilgrims on their route to the Holy Shrines.[148]

4.2 Corpse Traffic

By the mass conversion of Iranians to Shi'ism in the sixteenth century, the corpse traffic to the holy Shrines of Iraq remarkably developed, particularly to Najaf in which the Shrine of Ali, son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad, was situated. The desire of Shi'i Muslims to be buried near the Holy Shrines arose by the belief that being subjected to the interceding of the capable Imams on their behalf would help

[144] F.E. Peters, *The Hajj: The Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca and The Holy Places.* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 73-75.
[145] FO 195/2164 Document No: 917/70, (5 November 1904). From L.S.Newmarch, British Consulate General at Baghdad to W.P. Townley, British Charge D'Affaires at Constantinople.
[146] FO 195/2214, Document No: 464/43 (17 May 1906).
[147] Ibid.
[148] FO 195/1142, Document No: 127 (29 October 1879).

them to gain the mercy of God in the Day of Judgment. It was also a benevolence of Imams that would "reduce the interval (*barzakh*) between death and resurrection."[149] Furthermore, Naqash mentions a tradition "attributed to the sixth Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq [which] relates that being next to Ali for a day is more favorable than seven hundred years of worship."[150] According to Çetinsaya, "every year an important number of people, fluctuating from 30,000 to 100,000, from Iran, and India, visited shrine cities of Iraq, or brought the remains of their relatives to bury at the Atabat."[151]

There were some principle cemeteries in Iraq "outside the precincts of shrines themselves, which also burials take place, is in order of importance, the following: the Wadi as-Salam (Vale of Peace) at Najaf, the Wâdî al-Aimân (Vale of Security) at Karbala; the Maqabir al-Quraish, at Kadhimein; and Tarmah at Samarra."[152] The expense, "including fees payable to the Turkish Government, of transporting a Shi'ah corpse from Kermanshah to Karbala [varied] from 35 to 70 Tumans or, at present rates, from 12 to 24 shillings English."[153]

Throughout the nineteenth century, although there were serious disputes among the respectable Shi'i Mujtahids about the transportation of the corpses, as to whether it was in conformity with the established practices in Islamic fiqh or not, the issue of the transportation of corpses had increased gradually. Depending on the British Administrative reports on the Iraq Health Service, Naqash gives the estimates of the corpse traffic in the late nineteenth century that "as many as 20.000 corpses were brought annually to Najaf alone both from within and outside Iraq"[154] while

[149] Yitzhak Naqash, *Shi'is of Iraq*, 185-87.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Gökhan Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890-1908*, 100.
[152] FO 195/2338, Document No: 97/4, (1910). See also Naqash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, 185.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Naqash, *Shi'is of Iraq*, 187-90.

there were only 10.000 burial places. The gap between the number of burial places and the number of corpses had confused many of the witnesses of the time. However, it was understood later by the botanical surveys that thanks to the soil of Wadi al-Salâm "the rock and soil around the grave would hold only a short period of time before collapsing; this in turn would cause the cavity containing the corpse to sink down and disappear."[155]

The transportation of corpses, whether from inside or outside, was subjected to certain taxes. They were either the corpses of foreign subjects of Iran and India or the Shi'i Ottoman subjects. At an occasion, the annual average income derived from the transportation of Shi'i corpses to the graves near holy shrines was estimated to 7,700 Turkish Liras or 6,903 Pounds.[156] However, in fact, the number of the collected taxes was changing annually. For instance, some 5,620 Persian and 4,000 Ottoman subjects, in total 9,620 were buried in 1889 to these precincts, while some 9,754 Persian and 4,600 Ottoman, in total 14,354 subjects were buried in 1890. The revenue of the Ottoman government in Iraq from all the sources officially estimated at 6,009 liras or 4,807 pounds in 1889 and at 11,554 Liras or 9,243 pounds in 1890. Although it was thought that these amounts were not very considerable at the time, Ottoman educational counter-propaganda, which will be explained in detail, was heavily dependent on these funerary taxes collected from Shi'is.[157]

Fraudulence could sometimes occur during the transportation of corpses from Kermanshah to the abovementioned cemeteries near Holy Shrines. There were cases that muleteers, who had agreed to transport the corpse in exchange for twenty shillings, could leave the corpses down the Diyale River nonetheless in order to keep the money for themselves instead of giving it to the Ottoman officials. Similarly, for

[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid, 190.
[157] FO 195/2338 Document No: 97/4, (1910).

instance, the people responsible for the transportation issue could lay two corpses down into one coffin to escape the official expenses.[158] There were many other similar cases regarding the transportation, which was occasionally carried out through illegal ways. This impelled the local Ottoman governors to be in vigilance since the skirmishes that could brake out between the Arab smugglers and the Ottoman soldiers because of the smuggling of the corpses to Karbala and Najaf was a significant matter.[159]

An official document dated to 1850 gives the impression that at that time the Ottoman central authority was not aware of the taxes collected from the transportation of corpses to the holy shrines of Najaf and Karbala. According to the report, the central authority obtained the information around 1850s through rumors that every year approximately five hundred corpses were brought to these shrines from Iran and other countries of Shi'i governments, and were taken from each certain amount of funerary taxes raging from 100 to 200 *tumans*.[160] Hence, they supposed that the corpse traffic would then bring a considerable income to the central treasury.[161] However, three years ago, the increase in the tariffs imposed upon the transportation of corpses from abroad to Karbala and Najaf was the matter of complaint that was notified by the British Consulate on behalf of the Iranian government as against to the local Ottoman authorities in Iraq. Amongst the demands enlisted, one was the increase in the taxes upon the corpses from 4 to 5 k*ıran*, and the other was the introduction of a new funerary tax collected from the relatives of whoever buried in Kamaze near Karbala, which had not existed before and yet began

[158] Ibid.
[159] FO 195/2341 Document Page No: 1085/67, (5 December 1910).
[160] With reference to a document dated to 1847, 1 tuman was equal to 50 *kuruş*. Therefore, the tax demanded from these corpses ranged from 500 to 1.000 *kuruş* per each. See, A.DVN.DVE, 3, 16-A/78.
[161] BOA A.MKT.UM 62/39, 5/Ş/1267 (4 June 1851).

to be applied afterwards. Additionally, local authorities did not let the ritual ablution (*gusül*) of those who were the relatives of the Persian subjects residing in Iraq, unless they paid 1,5 kıran, or 75 *kuruş*.[162]

On the one hand, there is was continuing demand since the mass conversion of Iranians to Shi'ism, and on the other, the corpse transportation was an early-established practice. Therefore, the death bodies of Shi'is must have been brought to these holy shrines for many years and taxed by the local governors. However, the ambiguity of the central government about the taxes imposed upon the corpse transportation might mean unawareness of the central authority, which was restructuring its administrative and economic apparatuses with reference to the principle of central governance, and thus rediscovering its potential sources for the central treasury that were traditionally used by the local appointees. Furthermore, the previous document brings to mind the idea that the lack of knowledge of the central government would signal the evasion of the local administrators to report on their activities in order to maximize their incomes. However, this idea will remain ambiguous until it is examined whether the administrative reflexes of the local governors to the demands of the central government constitute a form of local consciousness.

4.3 Population Map of Iraq

The ethno-religious communal structures in the Ottoman Empire went through serious transformations in the late nineteenth century. Ottomans were classifying their non-Muslim subjects in definite categories of Christians, Armenians, and Jews. It had been the traditional division of the society into certain religious categories by the administrative units of the empire. However, this administrative

[162] BOA A.DVN.DVE3 16-A/78, 1264 (1848).

practice began to change and administrators adopted new ethno-religious categories by the second half of the nineteenth century. Christians, for instance, were classified as Bulgarians, Maronites, and Süryanis.[163] In addition, there occurred intricate situations. It was in 1882 that the Ottoman government classified different ethno-religious groups separately. In 1906-1907 censuses, "in addition to Bulgarians, Protestants, Armenian Catholics, Catholics, and Rums, they grouped Marinates, Süryanis, Caledonians, Jacobites, even Samiris as 'new nations' (*yeni millet*ler). But, Rum Orthodox, Armenian, Jewish *millet*s were counted forehead."[164] Thus, even the very few minority groups began to be counted within their own cultural dominions representing a separate identity. Sharing the same milieu, there appeared numbers of official documents about the geographical distribution of Iraqi population according to denominations in the late nineteenth century.

Ottoman Iraq was divided into three administrative provincial units: Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra. There were eight ethnic groups inhabiting in these provinces: Arabs, Turks, Kurds, Armenians, Süryanis, Jews, Nestorians, and Sabaeans. The former three constituted the greater majority of the Iraqi population. Kurds were generally inhabiting Mosul, while Turks, Kurds, and overwhelmingly Arabs together in Baghdad whereas only Arabs in Basra. There were approximately twenty religious sects in the Iraqi region including their sub-divisions as Sunni Hanefi, Sunni Şafi, Sunni Maliki, Sunni Hanbeli, Cağferi Usuli, Cağferi Şeyhi, Cağferi Akhbari, Aliyyullahi, Yezidi, Babi, Catholic Chaldean, Catholic Süryani, Süryani-i Kadim, Nestorian, Armenian Catholic, Armenian Nestorian, Armenian Protestant, Jacobite,

[163] Kemal H. Karpat, *Ortadoğu'da Osmanlı Mirası ve Ulusçuluk* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi Yayınları, 2001), 65.
[164] Ibid., 68.

Protestant Jew, and the Sabaean. There were five major languages spoken as Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian, and Persian.[165]

Baghdad and Basra provinces formed the greater majority of the total Iraqi population. According to Çetinsaya, the population estimates for provinces of Baghdad and Basra given by Vital Cuinet, whose book was published in 1894, still serves as the best account that numbered the provincial populations of Baghdad to 790.000 and Basra to 940.000.[166] The numbers given by Şemsettin Sami for the population of Baghdad is close to the number of Cuinet. According to the estimates of Sami, a part of Baghdad's population was composed of crowded Bedouin Arabs like 'Anaze and Shammar that were residing around Euphrates during summers and moving towards Najd in winters. The population of the subdivision of Baghdad province (*Bağdad livâsı*) was close to 300.000 including the Shammar tribe, whereas the total population of Baghdad province was approximately 800.000.[167] It meant that nearly two third of the population was living outside the city center.

In conformity with this information and with regard to the spatial distribution of the population, Çetinsaya surmises that, "the nomadic tribes inhabited the desert in the west and southwest and covered the 60 percent of the total area."[168] He further claimed that the percentage of the urban population had not changed between 1867 and 1905.[169] An official report, dated to 1880, help to better clarify the views on the general demographic structure of the Baghdad province. It shows that one quarter of the population was settled and "civilized" (engaged in agriculture), one quarter was

[165] BOA Y.A.HUS 260/130, 28/L/1309 (25 May 1892). Ahmet Cevad Pasha, Grand Vizier, Sublime Porte.
[166] Gökhan Çetinsaya. *Ottoman Administration of Iraq : 1890-1908*, Doctoral Thesis at Manchester University, 1994, 222. For the orginal source see also Vital Cuinet. *La Turquie d'Asie: Geographie, Administrative, Statistique*, Vol III, (Paris: 1890-95), 17 and 220-21.
[167] Şemseddin Sami Fraşeri. *Dictionnaire Universel: d'Histoire et de Géographie (Kamus al-Alem)*, Vol II (Istanbul: Mihran Matbaası, 1896), 1324-27.
[168] Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890-1908*, 12-13.
[169] Ibid.

settled but bedouin (not engaged in agriculture), one quarter mostly peasants was living in tents engaging in agriculture, and the remaining quarter was living in tents and itinerant.[170]

One of the earliest *tahrir* registers belonging to 1544 and kept by the Ottoman officials for the cadastral survey of the Iraqi region gives important information about the influence of Shi'ism in Kirkuk and Dakuk regions. Although the northern districts of the Iraqi region, unlike the provinces of Baghdad and Basra, were thought to be far from the predominance of Shi'i rituals and influence in general, there is a striking feature in this *tahrir* that the names recorded here are different from the names recorded in Anatolian or Arabian provinces. It shows the heavy influence of Safavids and particularly the Shi'i sect. Hüseyin, Hasan, Ali, İmamkulu, Şah, Şahvirdi, Baba and Pir were among the most frequently given names along Mehmed which was the most common name given in Anatolian provinces.[171]

Regarding the sectarian map and the spatial distribution of Shi'is inhabiting in the Ottoman Empire, it can be said that the majority of Shi'is belonged to either Imamiye or Zeydiye fractions of Shi'ism. The Imamiye was predominant in the Iraqi region while Zeydiye in Yemen. The inhabitants of Buhran District, in Yemen, were Batinis, whose characters were somewhat warlike, yet their numbers were few. There was another group belonging to Shi'ism, residing around Seyda and Lebanese Mountain, their numbers were also smaller though.[172] A confidential report, dated to 1910, indicates that the total population of the Iraqi provinces was reaching to 1.500.000 souls. "The alluvial plains at the head of the Gulf [were] predominantly

[170] BOA Y.PRK.AZJ 4/49, 29/Ra/1298 (28 February 1881).
[171] Yusuf Sarınay, *111 Numaralı Kerkük Livası Mufassal Tahrîr Defteri (Kanunî Devri)*, (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Dair Başkanlığı Yayın Nu: 64, 2003), 9-12.
[172] BOA Y.EE 38/118. A memorandum without name and signature presented to the Sublime Porte.

Shi'ah."[173] In places such as Hasa and Bahrain, there were strong Shi'i minorities composed of 56.000 and of 40.000 souls respectively. "The Persian Gulf [was] predominantly Shi'ah, chiefly on account of the countries at its head, while the Gulf of Oman [was] almost altogether Sunni and Ibadi."[174]

The Iraqi region, or rather the part of it with which were principally concerned by the British, contained "about 546.000 Shi'ahs as against about 175.000 Sunnis, but the Sunni element [had] political influence out of proportion to its numerical strength, chiefly in consequence of its connection with the government."[175] The majority of the inhabitants residing in Mosul were Sunnis in addition to few Aliyyullahis, Babis, and Cağferi Şeyhis. The majority of the subjects in Basra were Cağferi Usulis, while considerable number of the remaining part was Sunni. However, in that remaining part there were also Wahhabis, Cağferis and various Christian sects that did not have an important political weight.[176] The tribes inhabiting around the boundary regions from Revandiz to Hanikin were Sunnis whereas the tribes residing on the borderlands from Hanikin to Mahmûde were Shi'is.[177] However, there is no population estimates for those boundary-peoples.

Compared to the number of Muslims, the numbers of Jews, Christians, and Armenians were very few. According to a British confidential report, the number of Jews in the Persian Gulf was estimated to less than 62,000. Of these, 61,000 souls were living in Iraq. One possibility for the great concentration in Iraq might be the holy Shrines of Jews, namely the tombs of Ezekiel at Kifl and Ezra at 'Azair in Iraq. The number of Oriental Christians in the Persian Gulf was numbered to 11,000

[173] FO 195/2338, Document No: 97/4, 1910.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid.
[176] BOA Y.A.HUS 260/130, 28/L/1309 (25 May 1892) Ahmet Cevad Pasha, Grand Vizier Sublime Porte.
[177] BOA Y.MTV 282/58, 18/Ş/1323 (15 December 1905) From the Commandership of the Sixth Army.

altogether mostly residing in Baghdad, some in Basra in addition to few in Nasiriyah.[178]

According to an estimate dated to 1880, seventy-five percent of the total Iraqi population was composed of Shi'is, while remaining one quarter of Sunnis. There were also very few Christians and Jews.[179] According to the numbers given by Şemseddin Sami, though rough in character, the greater majority were Muslims, being half of the population as Sunnis and half as Shi'is.[180] However, the recent researches of Çetinsaya, along with the Vital Cuinet, about the subject give seemingly more reliable numbers. The number of Sunnis in the province of Baghdad, for instance, were estimated to 309,000, whereas Shi'is to 480,000. As for the province of Basra, the number of Sunnis were estimated to 276,500, whereas Shi'is to 663,150.[181] These numbers are also consistent with some official reports. According to a British report, dated to 1916, the division of the population of Mesopotamia between the two major denominations was that Sunnis constituted 1.037.000 whereas Shi'is 1.173.000.[182] Depending on these numbers, Çetinsaya infers that "in 1920s, [the number of] Shi'is was estimated to 56 percent of the whole population of Iraq (including Mosul)."[183] According to British Census of 1920, the percentage of Shi'is was 56 of total population, while Sunnis, including Kurds and non-Kurds, were 36 percent. The remaining 8 percent was representing the non-Muslims. The other censuses, such as the British Census in 1931 and the Iraqi census

[178] FO 195/2338, Document No: 97/4, 1910.
[179] BOA Y.PRK.AZJ 4/49, 29/Ra/1298 (28 February 1881). Ottomans considered the geographical size of the province of Baghdad, nearly 17.000 square kilometer, as equal to the size of France.
[180] Şemseddin Sami, *Dictionnaire Universel*, Vol 2, 1324-27.
[181] Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, Doctoral Thesis, 222. For the orginal source see also Vital Cuinet, La Turquie D'Asie, III, 17 and 220-21.
[182] Admiralty, *Mesopotamia*, p.66. Cf. Foreign Office, *Mesopotamia*, p.36 quoted in Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, Doctoral Thesis, 222.
[183] Gökhan Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, Doctoral Thesis, 222.

in 1947 give close numbers and do not change the percentages seriously, as the change of percentages ranges from three to five at most.[184]

Detailed information about the Iraqi population is crucial for understanding the magnitude and the direction of any change in the social structure. However, the most reliable population estimates for Iraq goes back, at best, to the late nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries such as those of Vital Cuinet, Şemsettin Sami, and official reports of British and Ottoman administrators. When the subject matter is to analyze the social change between the early and the late nineteenth centuries, then these estimates will not be sufficient to understand the nature and the magnitude of change. An average estimate of the numbers driven from different sources mentioned above helps only to understand the situation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Therefore, Shi'is were predominantly inhabiting the provinces of Baghdad and Basra. They had also a considerable influence on the districts of Mosul province and they constituted the greater majority of the total population, possible percentages ranging from 55 to 60. All the sources mentioned above agreed that the number of non-Muslim in the Persian Gulf was very small in amount and most of them were residing in Iraq. Therefore, Sunnis constituted 35 to 40 percents of the total population, predominantly occupying the administrative and other governmental positions.

4.4 Spread of Shi'ism: Myth or Reality?

Questions about the nineteenth century social reality of Iraq, which was largely marked by the profound tribalism, do not necessarily contradict with the assertion of 'the spread of Shi'ism'. When the heavy concentration of the Ottoman official documentation as well as some contemporary chronicles is considered, this

[184] Joyce N. Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as*, 8-9.

assertion becomes a serious historical question. A common theme in the Ottoman official documentation about the spread of Shi'ism is the stress on the seriousness and urgency of the situation and the subsequent necessity of taking immediate precautions. Interestingly enough, despite the heavy abundance of Ottoman sources on this issue, there are rare references to 'the spread of Shi'ism' in the British official documentation.

The earliest reports that reached the Ottoman authorities about the spread seem to be dated to 1860s. The villages of Baghdad that were close to the Iranian border thought to have been under the threat of Shi'i propagation. Ottomans assumed that the agents engaged in propagation, namely mujtahids, mu'mins and akhunds, were coming from Iran. Reception of Shi'ism by the Ottoman subjects was considered precarious for the dependence and loyalty of these subjects to the state. Hence, the application of necessary measures to prevent this spread seemed crucial. The "Shi'i Question" was thus recognized as amongst the most important affairs of the state.[185]

The possible political and religious consequences of the spread were known to the Ottoman authorities for many years. They were also familiar with the influence of the mujtahids over Iranian politics. Especially, the role of the mujtahids in abolishing the Tobacco Regie had a symbolic significance in the minds of the Ottoman officials, demonstrating the power of mujtahids.[186] Likewise, the growth of Shi'i influence in the Iraqi region introduced to the Porte since 1860s through the reports of Mehmet Namık Pasha in 1862, and later Mithat Pasha in 1869. However, the reports concerning the Shi'i presence and the spread of Shi'ism subsided for about fifteen years until the 9th year of the succession of Abdülhamid II. Then,

[185] BOA A.MKT.UM 549/27, 22/N/1278 (22 March 1862).
[186] BOA Y.PRK.AZJ 17/81, 11/M/1308 (26 August 1890).

according to Çetinsaya, the publication and circulation of *Hüseyniyye Risalesi* by the Ottoman authorities set in motion a counter propaganda against the spread of Shi'ism.[187]

Shi'ism was predominant in both Karbala and Najaf, somewhat tragically for the Ottomans. According to a report dated to 1891, the Valis and the Mutasarrifs were kissing the hands of *Akhund*s as a show of respect. Soldiers and the commanders were no exception. The situation was true for *Imam Musa* town, which was one hour distant from Baghdad, and for Samarra, which was thirty hours distant from Baghdad. The overwhelming majority of the localities in the Iraqi region from Basra to Najd were Shi'is. In addition, in every town, there were at least fifteen houses resided by Shi'i *molla*s or ulema.[188]

The tone of the Ottoman official documentation about the spread of Shi'ism was characterized by despair and hopelessness. Particularly, their fears reached to climax in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The Vali of Baghdad reported: "If the task of spreading Sunni education is omitted, then it will be impossible to find people who believe in the true tenets of faith even amongst the children of the government officials." [189] Similarly, Vahhab had informed Kamil Pasha that Shi'ism was spreading amongst the nomads and tribes-people in large portions, while nearly half of Baghdad's population had converted to Shi'ism. However, its expansion in the cities, where the settled people inhabited, was slower and conversion was taking place at a lower rate.[190] It was a double process in the countryside that either the Shi'i missionaries were visiting the nomadic tribes or the nomadic tribes were accidentally encountering with them. The members of the tribes were visiting the Atabat for once

[187] Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890-1908*, 101-02.
[188] BOA Y.PRK.ASK 72/80, 18/Ca/1309 (18 December 1891).
[189] BOA Y.MTV 45/24, 10/M/1308 (25 August 1890).
[190] BOA Y.PRK.BŞK, 57/16, 20/Ra/1316 (7 August 1898).

or twice a year. When they came to those shrines, they communicated only with the Shi'i Ulema. Accordingly, they just met with the Shi'i interpretation of Islam.[191] Regardless of its phase, the communication between the Shi'i ulema and the nomadic non-Shi'i people was considered by the Ottoman officials as a grave danger.

The numerical estimates of the Ottoman officials demonstrate the high level of anxiousness of the bureaucracy. They recognized that the sectarian map of Iraq was changing rapidly in the second half of the nineteenth century. The majority of the Ottoman subjects in Iraq, as supposed by the officials, had already accepted the Shi'i creed.[192] According to a report in 1893, Shi'is constituted more than one third of the province of Baghdad.[193] Another report, dispatched only six years later and written by Major Ali bin Hüseyin al-Fath claimed that eighty-five percent of the inhabitants of Samarra, Karbala, and Najaf was Shi'is. Feeding the fears of the central government, he added that, while only five percent of the total population was Shi'i including the city and its vicinity twenty-five years ago, thereafter this ratio increased and reached to sixty percent in the city and to eighty percent in the vicinity.[194] Ottoman officials thought that more than thirty percent of the Iraqi population had converted to Shi'ism in such a short time. The Ottoman officials thought that the Iranian ulema was so active in their missionary activity that they were going into the tribes and walking around them "like the electric currents" (*seyyâle-i elektrîkiyye misillü*).[195] In 1892, the current Vali of Baghdad reported that Shi'ism was spreading like the grasshoppers all around the Iraqi region.[196]

[191] BOA Y.PRK.MK. 4/80, 27/L/1306 (26 June 1889).
[192] BOA Y.PRK.ASK 219/83 27/Ca/1322 (8 August 1904).
[193] BOA, Y.PRK.EŞA 33/92, 1311 (1893).
[194] BOA, Y.PRK.MYD 23/18, 1317 (1899)
[195] Ibid.
[196] BOA, Y.MTV 59/41, 19/B/1309 (17 February 1892).

Ottoman officials had been traditionally attaching double reasons for the spread of Shi'ism. These were generally the insufficiency of Sunni education that consequently left people to ignorance, and the activities of Iranian mujtahids, mu'mins, and akhunds who furtively came to Iraq to "broadcast the good manners amongst those people."[197] The reasons assigned varied with slight differences, keeping the traditional way of presentation. Accordingly, Muhammed Arif Bey, Ottoman envoy to Tehran around 1893, informed the central government that there were two reasons for the spread of Shi'ism in Iraq. First, the activities of Iranians and particularly the *Akhund*s who visited villages, subdistricts (*nahiye*) and the tribes in order to spread the Shi'i creed; and second, the activities of Iranian Consulate which showed every inclination to interfere with the Iraqi affairs.[198]

According to a report dispatched in 1889, 95 percent of the inhabitants of Najd, Basra, Muntafik, Samarra, Hille, Najaf, and Kerbala was Shi'i, while only the remaining 5 percent was Sunni. The expansion of Shi'ism was so influential that it even led to the conversion of one third of the population of Baghdad to Shi'ism. Ferik Ismet Bey assigned two reasons for this expansion: first, the considerable amount of money from Persia and India distributed by the British consulate backing the Shi'i ulema, and second, the activities of Shi'i Mu'mins and *Akhund*s who were educated in the Shi'i *madrasa*s in Iraq. According to the surveys of Ferik Ismet Shi'ism had penetrated only to the Izza and Shammar tribes. The content of the memorandum presented by Ferik Ismet Pasha was confirmed with cross-reference to the other memorandums previously presented by Ali Bey, the current Vali of Tranzonid, Nafiz Bey, the chief of *Defterhane* in Baghdad, and Hasan Efendi, the

[197] BOA, Y.PRK.MK. 4/80, 27/L/1306 (26 June 1889)
[198] BOA, Y.EE 10/69

Mahkeme-i Teftîş-i Evkaf Müsteşarı. In conformity with their advices, the matter was endorsed to the *Bab-ı Meşihat*.[199]

Iraq was particularly important for all of the Shi'is because of its spiritual importance, having the shrines of Shi'i Imams and having educational importance owing to the Kerbala and Najaf as the leading centers of Shi'i education in the nineteenth century. In addition, inhabitants of these towns were predominantly Shi'is. In the nineteenth century, the Sunni education, as introduced in the official documentation, was quite backward compared to the Shi'i education. Hence, the lack of Sunni educational institutions as well as the incapability of Sunni scholars in Iraq was presented by the Ottoman officials as two major reasons behind the spread of Shi'ism. These reasons believed to have created a vacuum, which was filled by the activities of *Akhund*s who went into the tribes and converted them to Shi'ism.[200] Vahhab Bey, Financial Commissary of the province of Baghdad, warned the Sublime Porte that Shi'i akhunds, coming from Iran, were converting the Bedouin Arabs and other nomadic communities to Shi'ism. He solicited the Porte to take urgent precautions. He also complained about both the Mufti and Vali of Baghdad to the Porte. The tone of his language was almost pleading.[201] According to Major Ali bin Hüseyin al-Fath, the ignorance of Sunnis was causing to their dissolution and giving occasion to the spread of Shi'ism. The lack of piety and the shortage of Sunni ulema were the two causes behind the spread of Shi'ism.[202]

Even a rough comparison between the presence of Shi'i and Sunni scholars give convincing remarks on the situation. Vali of Baghdad reported in 1890 that Shi'ism was spreading because of the neglect and tolerance of both the government

[199] BOA, Y.MTV 43/114 23/Ra/1307 (16 December 1889).
[200] BOA, Y.EE. 8/9. The Memorandum of Alûsîzâde Ahmed Şâkir presented to the Sublime Porte.
[201] BOA, Y.PRK.BŞK, 57/16, 20/Ra/1316 (7 August 1898).
[202] BOA, Y.PRK. MYD 23/18, 1317 (1899).

and the Sunni Ulema who were looking for jobs to earn their livelihoods. Hence, they stayed away from educating students unlike their Shi'i counterparts, who were more organized and satisfactorily financed,[203] and whose numbers, according to the calculations of the Ottoman officials, were reaching to thousands in the Iraqi region in the late nineteenth century, residing with the purpose of teaching.[204] Vali noted that those Shi'i scholars were astonishingly spending hundreds and thousands of *tuman*s to open *Medrese*s and attracting people around them. Because of such a "political mistake," the number of Sunnis decreased very rapidly and the number of Shi'is increased asymmetrically. For the meantime, it was thought that the situation exemplified for Sunnis remained as "a white point on a black ox."[205]

The efficiency of the Shi'i education was one of the common reasons assigned by the Ottoman bureaucrats to the spread of Shi'ism. The Shi'i educational activities had been traditionally concentrated and powerful around the '*atabat*, attracting students from Persia, India, and other geographies of intense Shi'i residence. There were Persians and Shi'i Indians constantly visiting the Shrines for the purpose of pilgrimage and education, consequently stimulating the Shi'i social activity in Iraq. In addition, the powerful charismatic personality of Mirza Hasan Shirazî was increasing the synergy of Shi'i educational motivation since the last decade of the nineteenth century. According to the estimations of Refik Hüseyin, Vali of Baghdad, while there was not even a Sunni scholar, there were approximately 500 *Akhund*s. Hence, Sunni people were despairingly sending their children to the Shi'i schools.[206]

[203] BOA, Y.MTV 45/24, 10/M/1308 (25 August 1890).
[204] BOA, Y.MTV 45/13 7/M/1308 (22 August 1890).
[205] BOA, Y.MTV 45/24 10/M/1308 (25 August 1890).
[206] BOA Y.MTV. 90/76, 13/Ş/1311 (18 February 1894).

On the one hand, the Ottoman official documentation encourages the researcher that the rapid spread of Shi'ism was an unquestionable fact as detected and contested by various central as well as local officials. It was thought to be spreading through the agencies of the Shi'i mujtahids, mu'mins, and akhunds who came to Iraq, benefited from the backwardness of the Sunni education, and performed a missionary activity. On the other hand, the official documentation stimulates doubts of the researcher since the state's intelligence over its subjects seems very inaccurate. The numbers were generally rough in character giving no detailed accounts about when the spread began. The nature and magnitude of the spread cannot be estimated since the percentages were given as quarter, one third, half or with other similar ambiguous descriptions. They rather present rough percentages, emotionally charged descriptions, and uncertain numbers on the magnitude of the conversions to Shi'ism. Thus, it becomes necessary to ask whether the discourse, "the spread of Shi'ism," was a myth or a reality, or how the official outlook and actual historical circumstances played roles during the formation of this discourse. Despite the obscure exaggerations in the rough and inconsistent enumerations assessed by the Ottoman bureaucrats, and despite the recurrently used clichés of the official language that fosters skepticism and distrust about the validity of the official claims regarding 'the spread of Shi'ism', can it be simply said that there was a process of conversions to Shi'ism?

Indeed, they are not only the Ottoman official documentation that mentions the spread of Shi'ism. Gertrude Bell, for instance, noted in 1920 that, "It would be a curios historical study, if the materials for it existed, to trace the diffusion of Shi'ah doctrines in Mesopotamia. They have certainly spread, owing to the missionary zeal

of Shi'ah divines, during the last hundred years"[207] such as the Zubaid tribe that converted to Shi'ism at about 1830s. However, the tribes residing in the north stayed away from the influence of this Shi'i spread. In addition to this, Çetinsaya gives reference to an important report written by Currie and dispatched to Salisbury, indicating that around 1895 nearly 100,000 Sunnis converted to Shi'ism within few years.[208]

The spread of Shi'ism was taking place over wide areas. In Iraq, North India, Oman, and other places Shi'i activism brought about successful results. Cole noted:

> In fading Delhi, Sufi leader Shah Abdülaziz, who had Shi'i in laws, complained that in most households one or two members had adopted Imami Shi'ism. Sayyid Dildar Ali's Shi'i Sufi nemesis, Mawlavi Sami, said that during his time in India he had noticed great Sunni families gradually adopting Shi'i ways, first in their prayers, then in marriage ceremonies, burials, and the division of inheritance (some finding the Shi'i law in the last regard more convenient).[209]

The most recently published study on the history of Iraq under the Hamidian regime, by Gökhan Çetinsaya, furthered the importance of 'the spread of Shi'ism' claiming that the spread was the major source behind the formation of Hamidian Pan-Islamic policy. Çetinsaya stated:

> Though nothing came of this, it suggests that the controversies over Abdülhamid's Pan-Islamism need to be placed in the context of the Shi'i problem in Iraq, his attempts at Shi'i-Sunni unity, and relations with Iran, as well as the traditionally acknowledged contexts of Indian and Egypt.[210]

In other words, while the Hamidian regime was trying to figure out and solve the possible threats that might be posed by the Iraqi Shi'is in the future, they eventually formulated a policy of uniting all the Muslims first in Iraq, as the most diverse

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[207] Quoted in Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890-1908*, 100-101. Interestingly enough, and as contrary to the suggestion of Yitzhak Naqash, Bell claimed, "the nomads tend to hold Sunni tenets more than the settled cultivators."

[208] Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, Doctoral Thesis, 223. For the original source see also FO 424/183, Document No: 476 Confidential, (16 July 1895). From Currie to Salisbury.

[209] Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq*, 230.

[210] Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890-1908*, 151.

Muslim community in the Empire, and then in the whole Muslim world. Therefore, according to his calculations, the discourse, namely the spread of Shi'ism, was corresponding to the actual circumstances rather than being fictionally created by the Ottoman bureaucracy.

It was somewhat the constant worry of the Hamidian regime for achieving stronger political autonomy through establishing religious solidarity that eventually transformed the bureaucratic mentality. Interestingly, only after the readjustment of the Ottoman governmental mentality, empire's bureaucratic circles reinterpreted the Shi'i presence in Iraq in a different manner and thus gave birth to "the Shi'i Question." Hence, some historians, such as Yitzhak Naqash and Gökhan Çetinsaya, introduced "the spread of Shi'ism" as a gradual structural transformation that began in the late eighteenth century and continued the late nineteenth and as something that the Ottoman officials realized belatedly. Obviously, the reflection of the circumstances to the Ottoman documentation was partly due to the shift in the governmental outlook on the Shi'i presence in Iraq. However, the whole discourse was not simply a fictional creation of the Ottoman bureaucrats. There was something changing with the Shi'ism and the Shi'is of Iraq. Therefore, I argue to place the discourse of "spread of Shi'ism" somewhere in between the mythical interpretation of the Ottoman officials under the influence of Hamidian Pan-Islamist propaganda, and partly to actual historical processes interpreted by the scholarly debates on the history of Shi'ism in Iraq.

There remains a vital question about the content and the nature of 'the spread of Shi'ism' whether it was a nominal reception or had some intrinsic value. It is hard to give a clear answer to this question since the manifestations of beliefs hardly become the matter of historical documentation, however, will be attempted in the last

part of this chapter. Yet, without ignoring the possible consequences of the content of the spread, it would be more plausible to focus on a more comprehensive explanation. To this end, I would like to adopt the idea of "social closure" put forward by Frank Parkins, and utilized by Juan Cole as an illuminating explanation. According to Cole, "the professionalization among nineteenth century Shi'i clerics and the setting up of increasing communal boundaries between Shi'i Muslims and other religious communities"[211] are important for understanding the escalating synergy of Shi'i communities. Thus, it is the new and important contribution of this thesis that although Shi'ism had relatively spread into the tribes living in the countryside of Baghdad and Basra, it was the increased activity and organization of the Shi'i communities, which increased their effectiveness and weight in the political spectrum rather than the magnitude of spread itself. In this regard, the spread of Shi'ism shared a general historical context in the world history that will be explained below. However, before that it would be better to discuss an important process that is the rise of Usuli interpretation of Shi'ism at the expense of the Akhbari interpretation, reshaping, accelerating, and giving a great impetus to the Shi'i political activism.

4.5 The Triumph of Usulism: The Rise of Shi'i Politics

The rise of Usulism at the expense of Akhbari interpretation of Shi'i jurisprudence gave an innovative perspective to Shi'is for understanding and interpreting the worldly affairs. Usulism attributed a peculiar function to a group of Shi'i clerical notables. In this context, mujtahids began to be introduced as capable people who could make jurisprudential judgments depending on their reason and

[211] Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq*, 3. Also see Frank Parkin, *Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

consequently use political and religious authority over certain masses of people. Thus, they came to be religious as well as political leaders.

The Imami Shi'is were "largely political quietists before 1500, awaited the return of the [twelfth] Imam from Occultation, or supernatural disappearance." During the period of Occultation, "state-related functions as collection and distribution of taxes, leading Friday congregational prayers, and heading up holy war (*jihad*) campaigns could not be carried out until his return."[212] In relation to this, it was stated:

> The early Shi'i canonical collections of oral reports from the prophet and the Imams contained no designation of authority from the Imams to the clergy, and that although the relaters (sing. *Muhaddith*) of the Imam's oral reports were charged with acting as informal judges in disputes between Shi'is, the community could reverse their decisions if they found them to be based on oral reports not widely accepted as authentic.[213]

However, the qualities and functions of the rightful Caliph gained further importance during the formative period of Shi'i theology.[214] Representing the prophetic charismatic authority, Imam Ali came to assemble the unique representative authority of the exoteric and exoteric aspects of Islam.[215] According to the Shi'i version of Islamic legal authority, the doctrine of Imamate did not allow the disappearance of the personal prophetic charisma of the Prophet Muhammad. The doctrine further enabled the continuation of the prophetic charisma through the successive Imams, and eventually gained a permanent endurance with the idea of the occultation of the twelfth Imam.[216] The doctrine of the occultation and its permanent endurance until the return gave a legal spectrum to the Shi'i jurists to transform the

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[212] Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq,* 4-6.
[213] Ibid., 5. For the rest of the argument also see Joseph Eliash, "Misconceptions regarding the Juridical Status of the Iranian 'Ulema'," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 10 (1979): 9-25
[214] Hamit Dabaşî, *İslam'da Otorite: Peygamberin Gelişinden Emevi İdaresine Kadar*, (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 1995), 165.
[215] Ibid., 163-64.
[216] Ibid., 188-89.

status of the Mujtahids. Thus, the two main premises of the Usuli Shi'ism as "the use of independent reason (ijtihad) and the trust to human intellect" transformed into the tools of discovering the will of Hidden Imam.[217] "The triumph of the Usuli position divided the Shi'i community into two: muqallid and mujtahid."[218] Mujtahid, as merji-i taqlid, was liable "to dispense guidance on political matters in a sense opposed to the will of the state."[219] Mujtahids began to fulfill various functions over the society vis-à-vis the state authority. They involved in education, judicial matters, marriage contracts, and economic activities in bazaars, all of which fit the realm of the states and thus authorized by it.

Merji-i taqlid was another important concept that emerged with the rise of Usulis. Especially after the deaths of Shafti and Sayyid Mahdi Tabatabai, the invention of the concept was due to a practical necessity of fighting against the Shaykhism and Babism. The mujtahid who occupied this status was thought to be representing conscience of the society as the central delegate of the ulema's supreme authority. Marji-i taqlid meant the prominence of a mujtahid over other mujtahids, being at the top of the religious hierarchy.[220]

Hamit Algar introduced the struggle between Akhbari and Usuli schools of fiqh as the most important internal differentiation in the history of Shi'ism. The dispute between these two schools was about the methodology and principles of fiqh as well as the issues of taqlid and ijtihad. Taqlid meant "the submission to the directives of the learned in matters of religious law" whereas ijtihad meant "the exercise of rational judgment by the learned in the application of religious law."[221]

[217] Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq*, 4-6.
[218] Hamid Algar, "Religious Forces in the 18th and 19th Century Iran," in *Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol 7, 713-16.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Mazlum Uyar, *Şii Ulemanın Otoritesinin Temelleri*, 250-54.
[221] Hamid Algar. "Religious Forces in the 18th and 19th Century Iran," 711.

The Akhbaris, emphasizing the absolute authority of the Imams, "rejected both principles, holding that the entire community, learned and non-learned alike, should submit exclusively to the guidance of Imams. The Usulis by contrast proclaimed the legitimacy of submission to the directives of the learned, and of the practice by them of ijtihad."[222] According to Keddie, Usuli interpretation of fiqh provided "a doctrine of continuous reinterpretation of the will of the Imam, though it may have started for quite other reasons, institutionalized a flexibility regarding legal and especially political questions."[223]

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, both the power and the number of the mujtahids began to increase exponentially. "The Mujtahids [became] instrumental in forcing Fath Ali Shah to a second war with Russia, and obtained the dismissal of several provincial governors."[224] The opposition between Mujtahids and the Iranian state ensured and deepened during the reigns of Muhammad Shah (1834-1848) and Nasir ad-Din Shah (1848-1896). The number of Mujtahids, as well, "massively increased in the second half of the nineteenth century. While there were less than a dozen mujtahids in the first four decades of the nineteenth century," in the following four decades of the Nasir ad-Din Shah's reign, there were "nearly one half of the 359 noteworthy ulema of the period or some 175 persons, either explicitly or by inference, classifiable as mujtahids."[225]

The crucially important aspect of the victory of Usulis over the Akhbaris, as argued by the treatise of Muhammad Baqir al-Bihbihani, was that "it [became legally] incumbent on laymen to emulate not only the Imams, as the Akhbaris contended, but also the mujtahids, whose learning and religious eminence qualified

[222] Ibid.
[223] N.R. Keddie, "The Roots of the Ulema's Power in Modern Iran," in *Scholars, Saints and Sufis*, 224.
[224] Hamid Algar, "Religious Forces in the 18th and 19th Century Iran," 715.
[225] S.A. Arjomand, "The Shi'ite Hieorocracy and the State in Pre-Modern Iran," 68.

them to act as general representatives of the Hidden Imam." Thus, mujtahids had the legal right to collect and distribute the religious taxes (*zakat*) and to authorize jihad.[226] They began to utilize various sources of income. "Donations and religiously sanctioned taxes (zakat, khums) paid by the merchants formed the second most important source of ulema income after the endowments attached to mosques and institutions of religious learning."[227] The Mujtahids, having the legitimate right of ijtihad and sufficient sources of economic income, acted as political agents. "In 1843, the sack of the holy Shi'ite city of Karbala by the Ottoman governor of the Arab Iraq and the inaction of the Qajar government provoked Shafti to announce that he would dispatch an army against Baghdad whatever the intentions of the Shah."[228] In other words, the mujtahids regarded themselves as capable political rulers as well. In the beginning of nineteenth century, leading mujtahids began to collect religious taxes in the name of the hidden Imam.[229]

The capability of mujtahids in establishing a religious precedent was outwardly expressed by Bihbihani (1706-1746), a prominent Shi'i scholar known as the leading figure in promoting the Usuli dominance. The role of the mujtahids gained further impetus through the writings and activities of Muhammad Hasan b. Bâkır an-Najafi (1787-1850). Najafi enlarged the scope of the mujtahid's authority including the rule over political affairs, collection of religious taxes, protection of the weak, and the derivation of the incomes in the name of the just rulers.[230] The power of the mujtahids reached its zenith during the charismatic leadership of Mirza Hasan Shirazi (1815-1895). Although Shirazî did not leave any scholarly work behind, his

[226] Elie Kedourie, "The Iraqi Shi'is and Their Fate," 137.
[227] Hamid Algar, "The Oppositional Role of the Ulema in the Twentieth Century Iran," in *Scholars, Saints and Sufis*, 236.
[228] S.A. Arjomand, "The Shi'ite Hieorocracy and the State in Pre-Modern Iran," 73.
[229] Uyar, *Şii Ulemanın Otoritesinin Temelleri*, 269.
[230] Ibid, 211-15, 227-30.

political activism, especially his rejection of the Tobacco Regie in 1891, gave him an evident fame. His students, such as Naini and Khorasani who were to support the constitutionalist movement in Iran, continued the tradition of mujtahids' involvement in actual political affairs through justifying modern schooling and military services. Mirza Hüseyin Tehrani (d. 1908) and Abdullah Mazenderani (d. 1914) supported the idea of balancing Shah's authority with an assembly.[231]

To sum up, following the triumph of Usulism, the Shi'i hierocracy showed a strong tendency toward centralization of the Shi'i ulema. Through the nineteenth century, the teachings of the leading Shi'i scholars helped to create an efficiently functioning hierarchy. The predisposition toward perfection and consolidation of the Shi'i hierocracy bestowed an immeasurable competence to the Shi'i religious organizations and thus the authority of the Mujtahids over society increased considerably. Thereafter, the existing Shi'i communities elsewhere in the Middle East were driven by the mujtahids who were leading or representing in the Shi'i masses both worldly and heavenly affairs, both of which cannot be separated according to Islamic theology. This was chiefly a modern phenomenon that was sharing a broader historical context that will be explained in the following pages.

Before furthering the argument, the tendency of introducing akhunds and mu'mins, as the Shi'i students directed by certain mujtahids and as the ones who deliberately went into the tribes and fulfilled the social practical needs of tribesmen, should be criticized and revised. Regarding the statues of these Shi'i agents, the Ottoman official sources as well as Yitzhak Naqash introduced them as the major factor behind the conversion of tribes. These Shi'i agents were assumed as dignified and independent persons acting in solemnity and on behalf of the good will of their

[231] Ibid, 240-42, 305.

creed. However, the actual case shows that the Shi'i men of learning were not always powerful agents, independently acting, teaching, and enlightening the tribesmen through their visits. Indeed, they were in need of money and occasionally retained by the tribes to make them served in their matters such as arranging divorce and marriage contracts, writing for their correspondences and keeping their accounts.[232] What is important here, as argued by an Ottoman official document, is the connection between these Shi'i agents and their interlocutors. Although, they were retained by tribes and dependants in the beginning, they influenced the social structures to which they were accredited.

4.6 Contextualizing the Spread of Shi'ism

Pan-Islamism, Dreyfus Affair, the Zionist Movement, Irish Question, the rise of Mahdi in Egypt and accelerated activities of missionaries, as well as the rise of William Gladstone to prominence were sharing a general historical context. According to Akarlı, Islamism of Abdülhamid II emerged in a defensive mood in an age in which "religious fervor was becoming an increasingly conspicuous aspect of internal and international politics in the age of high imperialism with rapid industrialization and its concomitant social problems."[233] Contrary to the traditional perceptions of modernization and secularization, traditional religious powers tended to became far more dominant throughout the nineteenth century. An examination of the nineteenth century political-religious mass movements, including "those tied to Sufi orders like Shamyl's resistance in the Caucasus, or the Sanusis of Cyrenaica to the Messianism of the Babis of Iran or of the Mahdists of Sudan to the Orthodoxy of

[232] FO 195/1409, Document No: 33, (1 November 1882) From Trevor Chichele Plowden, the British Council General at Baghdad to the British Ambassador at Constantinople.
[233] Engin Deniz Akarlı, "The Tangled Ends of an Empire," 360.

the Iranian Ulema," all together demonstrates the accelerating force of the traditional religious powers.[234]

According to Karpat, "the upswelling from below made the Muslim masses gradually conscious of their social situation and identity, which then were politicized and redefined."[235] The Islamic revivalist movements in the late nineteenth century, except the Wahhabis of Arabia, were influenced by neo-Sufi movements and Nakşibandia. In addition, "all were popular, egalitarian movements, driven from below, and sought to regenerate and revive Islamic society morally from the inside … claiming to return to the religious fountainhead."[236]

Edmund Burke, provoking our methodological consciousness states that the changing contexts pose new perspectives, which certain thoughts predominate over others, and highlight certain presumptions. Thus, the idea of Islamic revival is partly a product of such a paradigmatic transformation in the perceptions, though partly rests on real circumstances. To make a sober reexamination of and to analyze the appropriate factors behind the increasing activity of Islamicate societies, Burke tended to make a differentiation between 'the Islamic movements' and 'the social movements in Islamic societies'. Burke offers a multi-layered explanation that favors the collective social movements that espoused some common symbols instead of Islamic political movements whose symbols and concepts are driven from the Islamic belief. The first layer is "the indigenous self-strengthening movements" that came into existence through the coercive power of the states, which demanded more centralized control over the population. The second layer, "the incorporation of the Middle East into the world economy" that deteriorated the existing communal

[234] N.R. Keddie, *Scholars, Saints and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions since 1500*, (London: University of California Press, 1978), 6.
[235] Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 20.
[236] Ibid., 44.

relations and raised sharp economic cleavages. The third layer is "the establishment of the [direct] European hegemony" that consolidated the fragmented internal opposition against the foreign evil.[237]

Ira Lapidus stresses the importance of the common symbols that gave legitimacy and popular attraction to Islamic socio-political movements since the second half of the nineteenth century. To him, the Islamic symbols and the leaders who represented them were the intrinsic values of the Islamic social structures. These symbols, though could only succeed in certain geographies, were carrying the potential for setting up organizational movements.[238]

During the second half of the nineteenth century the revolts in Algeria from 1851 to 1914, though mainly proto-nationalist and defensive in character against the colonial exploitation, were completely or partially organized by 'religious figures' who emphasized the universality and fairness of these movements.[239] Against the French invasion of Tunisia, 'activist men of religion' played a decisive role of propagating behind the scenes. "They not only commanded considerable resources and the loyalties of diverse groups of people but also had systems of communication and information at their disposal." Furthermore, the Sufi elite in southern Tunisia and Algeria "exercised a near-monopoly over learning sanctity, and consequently, moral authority." [240] The case of Abu Jummayza, who was "a religious figure in western Dar Fur who emerged into prominence in 1888, there years after the death of Mahdi

[237] Edmund Burke, III. "Islam and Social Movements: Methodological Reflections," in Edmund Burke III and Ira Lapidus. *Islam, Politics, and Social Movements*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 17-31.

[238] Ira Lapidus, "Islamic Political Movements: Patterns of Historical Change," in Edmund Burke III and Ira Lapidus. *Islam, Politics, and Social Movements*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 15-16.

[239] Peter Von Sivers, "Rural Uprisings as Political Movements in Colonial Algeria, 1851-1914," in Edmund Burke III and Ira Lapidus. *Islam, Politics, and Social Movements*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 55-58.

[240] Julia-Clancy Smith, "Saints, Mahdis, and Arms: Religion and Resistance in Nineteenth Century North Africa," in Edmund Burke III and Ira Lapidus. *Islam, Politics, and Social Movements*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 76.

[of Egypt]," showed that the already existing local oppositions gained more centralized and universalistic Islamic character toward the end of the nineteenth century, particularly due to the Western colonialist expansion.[241]

The main religious branches began to consolidate over small groups of religious factions. For example, followers of the Khodja sect were residing both in India and in the Persian Gulf, in countries such as Oman. Its history is dated to 15th century that began through conversions of Hindus living in Sind and Kach to the Ismaili Shi'ism. The term, Khodja, meant in the context of the nineteenth century 'honorable and worshipful convert.' Their numbers together in India and in the Persian Gulf were few as estimated to 2.000 souls. According to the description of the Geographical Volume of the Persian Gazetteer, Khodja was "a sect of people whose ancestors were Hindus in origin, which was converted to and has throughout abided in the faith of the Shi'ah Imami Ismailis, and which has always been and still is bound by ties of spiritual allegiance to the hereditary Imams of the Ismailis."[242] However, in the midst of the nineteenth century, schism prevailed in the history of the Khodja sect. The followers of this sect in Bombay, India, became Sunnis whereas the ones in Gwadar[243] accepted Twelver Shi'ism. Similarly, ninety percent of the Khodjas in Oman converted to Twelver Shi'ism. In compliance with the conjectural trends of consolidation and homogenization, the followers of Khodja sect adopted either Sunni or Twelver Shi'i interpretations of Islam.

As another example, at the end of the late eighteenth century, parallel to the rise of Usulism, there emerged a fraction from within the Ibadi sect, named as Mutawwa' barrowing some features of Wahhabism such as being "pledged to

[241] John O. Voll, "Abu Jummayza: The Mahdi's Musaylima?," in Edmund Burke III and Ira Lapidus. *Islam, Politics, and Social Movements*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 108-09.
[242] FO195/2338 Doc No: 97/4, (1910)
[243] Gwadar, today, is located on the southwestern coast of Pakistan, close to the Strait of Hürmüz on the Persian Gulf.

obedience." "The revolution of 1868, which carried Sayyid 'Azzan bin Qays into power at Masqat, was essentially Mutawwa' in its character." Between the years 1868-1871, there were fanatical proceedings of these sects in Oman. "The political ambition of individuals, the desire for change, and the hope of booty" were the main motives of seemingly religious disturbance that took place in Oman toward the end of the nineteenth century. Being responsible for these political turbulences, Mutawwa' movement had been the central dissident theme of the Oman politics as forming the continuous opposition. The rise of Mutawwa' as a strong oppositional figure in the Oman politics as well as the rise of the Ismailis to power under the leadership of Agha Khan in the midst of the nineteenth century was sharing a common paradigm with the resurgence of Shi'i political activism.[244]

The internal cohesion played an important role as much as the external threat for homogenization of certain scattered social groups around ethno-religious identities. For instance, in the late nineteenth century, Ottoman authorities had taken harsh measures to convert Yezidis to Sunni Islam. In this context, "Umar Wahbi's attack against Shaykhan in 1892 as commander of a reform force sent from Istanbul to Mosul to crush the tribal rebellions in the province provoked the conversion of the Yezidi Mir Mirza Beg and the desecration of the shrine of Shaykh 'Adi which was turned into a Quranic school."[245] However, this endeavor gave birth to "millenarian anti-Muslim propaganda," which created considerable degree of excitement and was carried out by two religious Yezidi persons from Shaykhan namely Mirza al-Kabari and Alias Khallu, and in return, frustrated the Ottoman campaign. Furthermore, this unexpected reaction mobilized the Yezidis of Jabal Sinjar whose numbers increased

[244] FO195/2338 Doc No: 97/4, (1910). In the early nineteenth century, the Ismailis, though did not endure, has enjoyed great political influence. In 1838, for instance, Muhammad Hussein Husseinî, Agha Khan, had revolted against the Persian government, seizing Kermanshah until defeated by the Persians. Thus, he was exiled to India in 1845.

[245] Fuccaro, *The Other Kurds*, 34-35.

considerably through the other Yezidis who joined them and formed an organized group gathering around Hamu Shiru, the leader of Yezidis at Jabal Sinjar.[246]

The process that led to the homogenization of population and thus quickened the establishment of central administrations was not secularization but rather a form of modernization, which adopted an Islamic mood. Within the socio-political context of the frontier of Asia, such a period of modernization brought about a bilateral process that caused the rapprochement of state and society. It was the extension of political domination over the very segments of society as well as the increase of public involvement in political affairs. On the one hand, certain institutions such as the *Maruzat-ı Rikabiyye İdaresi*, which operated under the Sarai machinery, functioned in collecting and replying the petitions presented by public and on the other, the continuing practice of public petitioning during the public processions of Sultans (*Cuma Selamlığı*), publicized the governmental apparatus. These two were the particular examples of the rapprochement between the Sultan and his subjects in the Ottoman context while the similar practice of petitioning played an important role in establishing direct communication between the Shah and the ordinary people in Iran.[247] The politization of religious communities took place in the similar process that the Shi'is of South Asia gone through.[248]

Despite various political and economic handicaps, there were considerable economic developments following 1890s that gave rise to the formation of 'organized labor movements.' "Economic developments and new opportunities

[246] Ibid, 113.
[247] *Nadir Özbek, Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Sosyal Devlet*, 32-33. Also see Mehmet İpşirli, "Osmanlılarda Cuma Selamlığı (Halk-Hükümdar Münasebetleri Açısından Önemi)," in Prof. Dr. Bekir Kütükoğlu'na Armağan, (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1991). Also see Nader Sohbrabi, "Revolution and State Culture: The Circle of Justice and State Constitutionalism in 1906 Iran" edited in George Steinmetz *State/Culture, State-Formation after the Cultural Turn* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).
[248] Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq*, 223.

accelerated the politization of the population."[249] Nadir Özbek explained the formation of public sphere in modern sense as the unintentional result of the Hamidian "paternalistic policy" that came out by the initiative of "ruling groups" that referred to "civic activities" for the purpose of "organizing popular consent, renewing and reproducing hegemony, and legitimizing themselves."[250] By the activities of Hamidian regime, there emerged and expanded a dynamic public sphere out of its search for legitimation.

Juan Cole rightly pointed out some elements of religious communalism and separatism towards the late nineteenth century that was true not only for the modern South Asia but also for Iraq. Two aspects of the major phenomenon were that "first, the increasing organization of religious communities for political action and competition for resources- began towards the end of the nineteenth century, helped by the growing literacy and mass communications. Second, local community leaders mobilized their religious communities as a means of gaining power."[251] The author mentions a third element that of the direct influence of the British power, which was partly true for the Iraqi case since they could not establish a firm control over Iraq until the first quarter of the twentieth century. The first two aspects of the explanation are perfectly fitting the circumstances that were observed in the Iraqi society. The transformation from a dispersed social structure to a more central one engendered fluctuations in the traditional structure. Though a full-fledged centralization had not taken place even in the early decades of the twentieth century, the increasing governmental cohesion against the decentralizing elements intensified the homogeneity within communal groups. At some point, increased activity of

[249] Akarlı, "The Tangled Ends of an Empire," 358.
[250] Nadir Özbek, "Philantrophic Activity, Ottoman Patriotism, and the Hamidian Regime, 1876-1909," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 37 (2005), 62-63
[251] Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq*, 223.

Shi’ism converged with the fluctuations in the social groups, whether urban or tribal, that eventually led to the nominal embrace of Shi’ism by the population, primarily by the tribes. After that, espousing their new identities, the discourse of their struggle against the official authority was redressed. In other words, mobilization of the communal groups took place in a religious mood, which was a mean for gaining power and opposing to the central authority.

All these arguments denote the fact that there was a structural change during the nineteenth century in the public sphere whose major theme was predominantly the religious revival. The major characteristic regarding the history of religion in the Middle East was a bilateral process that of ‘the homogenization of society’ and ‘the consolidation of organized social movements’ followed by a process of politization.

4.7 The Nature of the Spread of Shi’ism

In the second chapter, the structure of the Iraqi population was discussed drawing the conclusion that despite the heavy persistence of the Ottoman government to achieve the settlement and subservience of tribes, the socio-political reality of the Iraqi region in the second half of the nineteenth century was characterized by the ongoing tribal warfare. In this chapter, it is discussed that the effectiveness of Shi’i populations increased through the rise of mujtahids as powerful religious and political leaders who achieved the subsequent, yet limited and nominal, conversions of certain segments of the Iraqi population from Sunnism to Shi’ism. Therefore, there were two major processes in the late nineteenth century Iraq as the recurrent unrests caused by the tribal warfare and the resurgence of the Shi'i politics. However, these two processes, though happening concurrently, never caused the constant tribal rivalry to turn into a large-scale sectarian conflict.

An explanation to this seemingly paradoxical situation can be implicitly found in the writings of Hanna Batatu. Batatu's claim, in general, is that the division of Iraqi society was not based on a sectarian frame but rather on social classes distinguished by their historical experiences of administration and economic situations. In explaining the ethnic-class correlations of the Iraqi society, Batatu argues that there was a "deep-seated social economic cleavage" between Shi'is and Sunnis. High ranks and files of the Iraqi Army were occupied by Sunnis, who commanded the conscripted Shi'i tribes-people. Similarly, "the most influential mallâks or landlords of the province of Basra were, with one exception, Sunni, while the cultivators of their palm gardens were overwhelmingly Shi'i."[252] According to Batatu, various other similar cases illustrate the socio-economical stratification and the structural reality of Iraq.

Cole and Keddie argue another perspective that the content of the Shi'i protests cannot merely be confined to class disputes; in fact, they were carrying both ethnic-and-class based characteristics at the same time.[253] In the twentieth century Iran, nationalism as an identity "has often proven stronger than obvious religious or sectarian allegiances, even in a state of weak national identity."[254] According to Cole and Keddie, "Shi'i activism [differs] in Iraq or in Lebanon than in Iran, and most Iraqi and Lebanese Shi'is wish to achieve a more equal status within their own societies rather than to give up their national identities completely for religious ones."[255] Whereas Peter Marion Sluglett and Farouk Sluglett state comparatively in a more moderate perspective that:

[252] Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 44-45.
[253] Juan R.I. Cole and Nikki Keddie. (Eds) "Introduction" in *Shi'ism and Social Protest*, (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1986), 13.
[254] Ibid, 2.
[255] Ibid, 2.

> Several ties bind individuals to each other; family relationship, tribal affiliation, and co-residence continue to play an important part in people's lives, and the lack of a democratic and regular administrative hierarchy makes the use of such channels indispensable. In this kind of society, sectarian membership, of whatever sect, plays a similar role, but because individuals may be operating on several levels at once, it is normally impossible to disentangle the specifically sectarian or family or tribal or co-residence ingredient of any particular intra-personal relationship. Hence we cannot say that the fact of being a Sunni or a Shi'i is of no importance, but it is generally only of importance in this sense.[256]

Therefore, it can be inferred that the sectarian affiliations were not predominantly but, at most, equally important as much as other traditional factors such as the tribal affiliations and the co-residence that made up the Iraqi social fabric. Thus, despite the seemingly strong penchant, the ongoing tribal warfare did not turn into a large-scale sectarian conflict in Iraq. Indeed, Afghanistan experienced a similar case in the last decade of the nineteenth century through the Hazara War (1891-93). Following his reign, Abdurrahman as a Sunni Muslim ruler wanted to integrate the whole territory and pacify other potential powers including the "tribally organized Hazaras, the largest Shi'i community in Afghanistan, and one of the poorest groups, inhabiting a mountainous region that is characterized by long, cold winters and a paucity of arable land."[257] To this end, securing a fatwa from the leading Sunni ulema of Kabul, Abdurrahman declared the Shi'is infidel. His primary concern was to provide legitimacy for his military actions and justify the collection of the booty from the Hazaras. Abdurrahman further planned the incitement of the other Sunni tribes that could have made the benefit of booty and gladly join him. However, unexpected developments occurred beyond his plans. The previously isolated tribal warfare began to turn into a larger sectarian conflict. To defend their region and religion, Shi'i Hazara tribes united and set up a coalition under a Sayyid, Timur

[256] Peter Marion Sluglett and Farouk Sluglett, "Some reflection on the Sunni/Shi'i Question in Iraq", *Bulletin* (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies), Vol. 5, No. 2. (1978), 79-80.
[257] David Busby Edwards, "The Evolution of Shi'i Political Dissent in Afghanistan" in Juan R.I. Cole and Nikki Keddie *Shi'ism and Social Protest*, 202-207.

Shah. Like Abdurrahman, they secured a fatwa from the leading mujtahids of Mashed against Sunnis. Soon after, the Qizilbashs, a major element of the Afghani Shi'is, were suspected by Abdurrahman who began to persecute them. Finally, Abdurrahman's campaigns overwhelmed the resistance, reduced the power of Sayyids and tribal leaders, confiscated their lands, and relocated the inhabitants of the Hazaras.[258] Both due to the extensive power of Abdurrahman and the incapability of the Shi'i tribal coalition, the sectarian conflict did not have a permanent impact. Otherwise, the excessive potential would have made the conflict more ostensible.

It seems fair enough to argue that the distinctive characteristic of the geographical distribution of the Iraqi tribal population alongside the lenient policies of the Ottoman government towards the Iraqi Shi'i population avoided the materialization of such potential. The presumably accidental geographical distribution motivated them to adopt certain sects. The urban population of Baghdad, for instance, was living in different city quarters according to their faiths, sects, and classes. The Shi'i Shrine cities were predominantly housed by Arab or Persian Shi'is whereas the places, such as al-A'dhamiyah where the shrine of Imam Azam situated, was populated by Sunnis.[259] Furthermore, sometimes two branches of the same tribe could differ from one another as one being Sunni and the other Shi'i. The Shammar Jarba', a branch of the Shammar Arabs, lived around Mosul province and was Sunni, while the Shammar Toqah, another branch of the Shammar Arabs, lived around the south of Baghdad and was Shi'i. The same was also true for the Dulaim tribe one branch of whom resided around the middle Euphrates and was Shi'i whereas the

[258] Ibid, 202-07.
[259] Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 18-19.

Dulaim tribe itself resided around the Euphrates and around the northern parts of Baghdad and was Sunni.[260]

In addition to these factors, Marion Sluglett and Farouq Sluglett argue that the social stratification in Iraq was characterized by the ability of administration and the magnitude of economic wealth in the historical experience. Sunnis had been dominating the administrative offices for the long time. They were urban and wealthy and inhabited in Baghdad, the centre of political authority, while Shi'is were largely poor and lived in the rural areas. They remained untouched with the political circumstances unless they felt the necessity of protesting anything against their interests, beliefs or threatened their presence. Even after the 1920s, the tribal affiliations were much more important than being a devout of a particular sect. People were identifying themselves with regard to their families, which belong to certain tribes.[261] Even more, Shi'is might have been more reluctant to the social change due to the fact that they were mostly a part of illiterate agrarian society and had nothing to say in the political decision making process.[262]

To determine 'who believes in what' is a controversial issue, thus cannot be easily understood as long as revealing the manifestations of people's faiths is quite hard. However, the ways of living can give an insight to understand the degree of religiosity among the Iraqi population thus help to clarify to comprehend the content of the spread of Shi'ism. As it was recurrently expressed throughout the study that the social and cultural values of the nomadic life were so powerful in the Iraqi society even in the midst of the twentieth century, some Shi'i Arabs identified themselves as bedouin, highlighting the values such as braveness, purity of race,

[260] Ibid, 41-42. See also Marufoğlu, *Osmanlı Döneminde Kuzey Irak*, 77-78.
[261] Peter Marion Sluglett and Farouk Sluglett, "Some reflection on the Sunni/Shi'i Question in Iraq," 79.
[262] Ibid., 80.

strength against difficulties, and superiority over the townsmen.[263] Among the Arab nomadic people, across a huge geography including North Africa, Yemen, Oman, and Arabia, the religious rituals were occupying a less important place especially when compared to the settled people. For this reason, generally speaking, they had no particular 'cult of death saints' which is peculiar to settled life-style.[264] Iraqi nomadic population did not constitute an exception to this situation. According to Batatu, "the life of urban Arabs was on the whole governed by Islamic and Ottoman laws, that of the tribal Arabs by Islamically tinged ancient tribal costumes."[265] Therefore, the content of the spread remains ambiguous. In addition to this, one should be careful about the morphology of the social structure, which is important to understand the perception of piety and the nature of any sectarian affiliation. There has to be a separation between the ways and degrees of piety in nomadic and urban people. Nomadic people are driven more by their customs and traditions than the rules of the Shar*ia*'. Rules of the Shar*ia*' are much more binding in the cities where many people are living together. Indeed, there are many official documents illustrating complaints of the Ottoman governors regarding the irreligious nature of nomadic life.[266] Hence, the Ottomans were content with the idea of sending *ulema* into these nomadic populations. Undoubtedly, their opinions were in conformity with the reality of the time. Moreover, they were expecting that the increase in religiosity of people, in return, would increase their respect and obedience towards the Caliph and the state.

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[263] Naqash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, 174-75. Accordingly, the Shi'i missionaries who were aware of the psychological conditions of these tribesmen were using appropriate manners to get them close to Shi'ism. They were embodying the values like masculinity, pride, courage, honor, and courtesy and eloquence in an ideal man who was finally representing the "heroic stand of Hussein" or Ali, son in law of the prophet Muhammad.

[264] Ibid., 173-74.

[265] Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*,13.

[266] See, for instance, Selim Deringil, "They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery: The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post Colonial Debate," *Society for Comperative Study of Society and History* (2003).

CHAPTER 5

EDUCATION AS AN OTTOMAN RESPONSE TO THE SHI'I QUESTION

Although this study argues that the spread of Shi'ism was nominal in character and was mainly focused upon the mobilization of the Shi'i communities around the political-religious charisma of Mujtahids, Ottoman authorities perceived the spread of Shi'ism as a process of rapid conversion of great numbers of Sunni masses to Shi'ism. Thus, the Ottoman authorities assumed that the spread had some intrinsic value, which could pose considerable political threats in the near future. Because of that dynamic, it is necessary to introduce the education policy of the Ottoman officials as the central method of their systematic counter-propaganda against the spread of Shi'ism.[267] From this perspective, it is clearly understood then why the Ottomans placed so much emphasis upon modern education. Any researcher studying the history of education in late nineteenth century Ottoman Iraq would likely have had his interest piqued by the state documents, which illustrate the profound belief of the Ottoman officials in the transformative power of education.

[267] There are two other methods, which Ottomans tried to utilize against the spread of Shi'ism or to break the influence of Shi'i scholars in the Iraqi region: the ban on foreign currency and the ban on imported publications from Iran. Although I reached some convincing conclusions on these two issues, the research is still in progress. Therefore, they will be the subjects of another study.

For the Ottomans, preventing the spread of Shi'ism was "an obvious precept" (*emr-i bedîhî*), which meant an evident and necessary object, having no need to be proven or manifested.[268] Thus, education, particularly in the modern sense, had by the Ottoman Empire been endowed nearly a "magical" ability to change the society in the manner which the Ottoman authorities aimed to achieve.

Indeed, as a universal phenomenon, state involvement in public education globally increased towards the end of the nineteenth century. This was true for France as well as the Russian, Japanese, and Ottoman empires. In Russia, for instance, promoting modern education was among the chief priorities of the empire along with building railroads. In France, political leaders, both conservatives and republicans, regarded modern education as a "panacea" to create a modern state and society. Living in the same historical context, "the Ottoman Empire shared with France, and with Russia, China, and countless other lands, an extraordinary optimism that looked beyond a myriad of pressing ideological and infrastructural problems. New style education appeared as a seemingly universal beacon of hope."[269] Promoting modern education was very much to do with the quest of keeping the territorial integrity and administrative durability of the states. It was the milieu of the time that:

> Much of the flurry educational activity in Western European countries in this period is linked to (not unfounded) fears of being overtaken by their neighbors, not just in a military sense but in a technological and cultural one as well. Thus, the legacy of 1870 animated educational expansion in France, where it was thought that German victory was due in large part to superior Prussian education, while Germanophobia and Germanophilia alternately affected the shape of Russian educational developments.[270]

[268] BOA, Y.MTV. 54/82, 22/S/1309 (26 October 1891).

[269] Benjamin Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 27-40. For a detailed account of re-formation and modernization of Ottoman schooling system, see Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire (1839-1908): Islamization, Autocracy, and Discipline*, (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2001).

[270] Ibid, 34. See also for the Egyptian case in the same period, Bradley James Cook, "Egypt's National Education Debate," *Comparative Education* 36 (2000): 477-90. Hoda Yousef notes, "Almost every

Ottoman authorities wanted to use the panacea of education to solve the Shi'i Question in Iraq. In general, "the state redoubled its efforts to fund and build schools wherever possible in keeping with the vision of the 1869 Education Regulation."[271] In 1884, the Education Fund was created by the Hamidian Regime. As a stable income stream, the fund played a critical role in the establishment of primary schools in the provinces between 1882 and 1894. The source for this fund could be derived from an increase in "the amount of tithe (ö*şr*). Previously, one per cent of the total harvest had gone to the Public Works Fund, but now 1.8 of tithe would be taken." [272]

Rather than favoring the use of forceful measures, Ottoman authorities preferred to employ counter-propaganda, with the aim of promoting the expansion of Sunni education, to check the spread of Shi'ism. Ottoman authorities regarded ignorance as the main reason behind the growing acceptance of Shi'ism whereas the broad exposure to Sunni education was deemed as the cure to the political and religious threat of the Shi'i spread.[273] Various Ottoman official documents centered upon the idea of disseminating Sunni education, regarding it as the best method of counter-propaganda. To this end, various methods were used such as constructing medreses where the appointed ulema taught Sunnism, sending itinerant Sunni preachers to the tribes as well as to the urban centers of the Iraqi region, inculcating Sunnism into the minds of Shi'i children, and strictly monitoring the activities of Shi'i Mujtahids and Iranian pilgrims visiting the Shi'i shrines.

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faction calling for change- bureaucrats, modernists, reformists, colonialists, Islamists, traditionalists, and so forth- looked to education as a means of transformation, reform, or evolution." and Hoda A. Yousef, "Reassessing Egypt's Dual System of Education Under Isma'il: Growing 'ilm and Shifting Ground in Egypt's First Educational Journal, Rawdat al-Madaris, 1870-77," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40 (2008), 109.

[271] Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, 91.

[272] Ibid, 118-23.

[273] Selim Deringil, "A Study in Ottoman Counter-Propaganda," 61. See also BOA Y.PRK.MYD 23/18, 1317 (1899).

The reason behind the implementation of education policy was the high level of optimism shown for the transformative power of education as well as the conjectural political necessities. According to Selim Deringil, as an alternative to the military option, the policy of education became a sort of "siege mentality" which pervaded the thinking of the Ottoman officials and kept their vigilance high in their quest to keep Shi'ism at bay.[274] Deringil further argued that the Ottoman authorities required and adopted this policy because of the heavy presence of Shi'is that constituted a great share of the total Iraqi population.[275] Along with these two important factors, the Ottoman official documentation also mentions another reason behind the state policy of education. It was believed that the education policy would have brought about more useful results instead of taking harsh measures since this method was thought to be more respectful of the rule that postulated "enforcement for the correction of faith is not allowed" (*cebren tashîh-i i'tikâd kâideten mümkün olmadığı cihetle*).[276] In addition to the last issue, the Ottoman officials explained their tendency to favor the education policy by expressing that "the malicious means do not behoove the Ottoman government."[277]

To better analyze the implementation of the Ottoman education policy, it is useful to explore some other dimensions that are interlinked with each other. As stated earlier, the optimism for the transformative power of education was deeply ingrained in the thinking of the Ottoman officials. This perspective coincided with two other factors: first, the principal characteristic of the Ottoman perception of Shi'i treat, and second the foremost and urgent necessities of the Iraqi region. Although the Ottoman authorities exclusively used the religious discourse while justifying their

[274] Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 100.
[275] Ibid, 61.
[276] BOA, Irade Dahiliyye 96880, 14/Z/1308 (20 June 1891).
[277] BOA, Y.EE 10/69, 11/S/1312 (13 August 1894).

counter-propaganda, they viewed the Shi'i Question mostly from a political standpoint. Thus, the main feature of the Ottoman official documentation on the preventive measures against the spread of Shi'ism was largely to pre-empt a potential danger that might pose political threats in near future. Furthermore, the ongoing tribal conflicts constituted one of the most troublesome issues on the state agenda, which required urgent attention in the Iraqi region. Since the military weakness of the imperial troops and gendarmerie was obvious, the Ottoman government was faced with grave difficulties in establishing authority over the region. Therefore, Ottoman authorities discouraged the thwarting of the majority of the Iraqi population and placed resolving the tribal conflicts at the top of their agenda instead of using force against a future threat. In the view of the Ottoman administration, the spread of Shi'ism was a nascent process; thus, the educational counter-propaganda could peacefully dissuade the furthering of the Shi'i movement. Attention could have also been given to the well-established and much avowed belief in the rule that "enforcement for the correction of faith is not allowed." Appointing ulema and preachers to correct the beliefs of the subjects recently converted to Shi'ism was seen by the Ottomans as the "just and preferable way"[278] of dealing with the issue. The Ottoman administration preferred to establish advisory commissions and to carry out lenient policies to solve the heterodoxy issue.

In corroboration of their trust in education, Ottoman officials explained the major strength behind the spread of Shi'ism with intensive Shi'i educational activity that was enabled by abundant financial supports. Along with the other reasons, the Ottoman officials had chosen the education policy as an efficient tool for their counter-propaganda, as the officials anticipated that if they could have sent Sunni

[278] BOA, A.MKT.UM 549/27, 22/N/1278 (22 March 1862).

ulema amongst those tribes that had not yet met with Shi'ism, then it could be possible to keep them away from "seductions." Refik Hasan, the Vali of Baghdad, suggested that the central government appoint eight ulema to places such as Deylem, Horosan, Mendeli, Kût-ul Ammâre, Samarra, Anh, and Kazımiye with the allocation of monthly 800 kuruş per each *alim*.[279]

Ottoman authorities tended to give utmost importance to the education of the basic tenets of the Sunni faith (*akaid*) in mosques, medreses, and in all of the elementary (*ibtidaiyye*), high (*idadiyye*), and the military schools. The students receiving education in these institutions were advised to pray five times and in congregation according to the Sunni procedures. Disorderly functioning educational institutions such as *mekteb-i sıbyan* (a primary school for children), which financially depended on the weekly payments of students, were considered to be taken under state control, including the institutions that were deemed unable to train and reproduce satisfactory scholars capable of providing education in both the "religiously and politically" important sciences, which were *tefsir* (exegesis), hadith, and *akaid* (the tenets of faith).[280] Thus, the reformation of the medreses in Baghdad appeared to be fundamental to the Ottoman officials in order to retain both the subservience of the subjects and to establish political authority in the region.

Alusizade Ahmed Şâkir, from a well-known Iraqi ulema family, wrote a general memorandum about the spread of Shi'ism and listed some methods to address the problem. It appears that his memorandum was amongst the most comprehensive ones in including various aspects of Ottoman educational counter-propaganda. He explained the reasons behind the rapid spread of Shi'ism as being the concerted educational activity of the Shi'i mujtahids, mu'mins, and akhunds, and

[279] BOA, Y.MTV 59/41, 19/B/1309 (17 February 1892).
[280] BOA, Y.PRK.MK. 4/80, 27/L/1306 (26 July 1889).

highlighted chiefly that the financial support of the British government and the large sums of donations endowed by rich Iranian merchants were behind the success of these Shi'i scholars. He further suggested that itinerant Sunni preachers be sent to the tribes and advised that ulema be appointed to the Five Medreses of Iraq (*Medaris-i Hamse*), meaning the major medreses of Imam-ı Azam, Abdülkadir Geylâni, Sayyid Sultan Ali Rufâî, Shaikh Sandal, and Münevvere Hatun. These suggestions and other advice were centered upon the education policy of instilling the Sunni creed that both would have protected the unguarded faiths of people and ensured their obedience to the Sultan.[281]

Major General Sayyid Tevfik Osman, commander of the 22nd Brigade of the Sixth Army Corps, suggested that in addition to sending of the ulemas, there should be a population transfer and settlement of at least twelve to twenty thousand Anatolian immigrants to the Iraqi region. He argued that this would not only hinder the spread of Shi'ism but also prevent the arbitrary raids of the Hemevand and Jaf tribes over Mousul, Süleymaniye and Şehrizor, resulting in the vacant quarters of Mousul, Baghdad, and Basra becoming prosperous. In addition, replacement of the soldiers from the Iraqi region with the provincial armies of Anatolia and Rumelia every three year would preclude potential disorder. He also suggested administrative reforms, such as the formation of a new post, which would have both political and military functions in order to overcome the problems that arose from the lack of coordination between the provinces of Iraq. For instance, because of the coordination problems, there were recurrent and constant problems regarding the conscription done every year, which was based on a system of drawing of lots. The absentee conscripts numbered to thirty thousand potential personnel. Therefore, the appointee

[281] BOA, Y.EE. 8/9, 13/C/1323 (16 June 1905). For the use of the same document also see Selim Deringil, "A Study in Ottoman Counter-Propaganda," 63.

should have the authority over a vast territory including Baghdad, Basra, and Najd. If this suggestion were not to be implemented, then Baghdad was recommended to be chosen as the center of command for another formation of a post, which would function as the *Âsâkir-i Nizamiyye* from Mousul to Basra.[282]

Many reports and petitions about the educational propaganda began to reach both the central and the local Ottoman administrators. Vahhab, the Minister of Finance of the Baghdad Province, suggested to the Porte the summoning of a scholarly community to sort out accurate and appropriate precautions for the spread of Shi'ism.[283] Others argued to entrust the appointment of eligible and officially recognizable men of learning with the task of public sermons.[284] Underscoring the fact that a solution needed to be found as soon as possible, a report carefully emphasized the public frustration from the spread of Shi'ism. Local authorities were advised to appoint experienced scholars to the mosques and medreses through paying monthly salaries ranging from 300 to 500 *kuruş*.[285] Ömer Behçet Efendi, the Baghdad central substitute for Takiyyiddin Paşa, thought that vakfs (charitable foundations) of the medreses and mosques, which were controlled by powerful persons, should be retaken and reorganized by the state for the improvement of education.[286] Divisional General (Ferik) İsmet Paşa, inspector in Baghdad, advised that a sufficient number of primary schools (*mekatib-i ibtidâiyye*) should be opened and children should read the Qur'an and learn the Sunni *akaid* (the basic tenets of

[282] BOA, Y.PRK.ASK 78/20, 18/Ca/1309 (19 December 1891).
[283] BOA, Y.PRK.BŞK, 57/16, 20/Ra/1316 (7 August 1898).
[284] BOA, Y.MTV 45/24, 10/M/1308 (25 August 1890).
[285] BOA, A.MKT.UM 549/27, 22/N/1278 (22 March 1862).
[286] BOA, MV.12/53, 20/Z/1303 (18 September 1886).

Sunni faith).[287] Ömer bin Mahmud İhsan, director of a high school, in his petition to the Sultan, offered to increase the number of primary schools.[288]

Refik Hasan, the Vali of Baghdad, suggested opening a medrese and appointing Shaykhh Muhammed Said Efendi as the chief *müderris* with a monthly salary of 1.100 kuruş. Said Efendi was a member of the ulema class of Baghdad and a Sunni scholar dealing with education in Samarra as well as a central figure in the Ottoman educational counter-propaganda in the Iraqi region. Said Efendi was working as a müderris at *Muhammed-ül Fazl* mosque and belonged to the Nakşibendi order.[289] He announced that Iranian Mujtahids were opening medreses in which various Akhunds, Shi'i students, were educated. These students were sent into the tribes and, in time, attempted to convert the tribal members to Shi'ism. Against this situation, Said Efendi, advised to cultivate educated Sunni students. To this end, he suggested the repair of an old and deteriorated mosque with its adjoining medrese in Samarra. Sunni students, having completed the elementary religious education would be sent into the tribes, just as their Shi'i counterparts, in order to teach the basic tenets of faith or the principal necessities of religion (*zarûruiyyât-ı dîniyyelerini öğretmek üzere*). Said Efendi calculated that the total number of allocated stipends for almost a hundred students would cost 6,000 *kuruş*, which could be extracted from the funerary taxes (*define rüsûmu*).[290] The request of Shaikh Said Efendi was accepted by the Sultan. Thus, the Ottoman officials allocated 1,200 kuruş for repair of the mosque, medrese, and a *dergah* (a dervish convent) in Samarra in addition to

[287] BOA, Y.MTV 43/114, 23/R/1307 (16 December 1889).
[288] BOA, Y.PRK.MF 2/36, 13/Za/1309 (8 June 1892).
[289] BOA, Y.MTV 73/71, 9/C/1310 (28 December 1892).
[290] BOA, Y.PRK.MŞ. 6/18, 20/Ş/1313 (4 February 1896).

the monthly payment of 5,000 kuruş as stipends. The central government recommended the enrollment of at least 100 students.[291]

On 30 May 1894, some local ulema were appointed by an imperial decree to carry out the counter-educational activity against the spread of Shi'ism. They were given salaries on different scales. Those of who were appointed with the salaries of 200 kuruş were Sayyid Mustafa, Sayyid Ma'ruf, Sayyid Hasan, Sayyid Ömer and Sayyid İsa, all of whom were the brothers of Shaikh Said Efendi. In addition to them, Sayyid Muhammed Efendi, son of Shaikh Said Efendi, and Sayyid Ma'ruf Efendi, cousin of Shaikh Said Efendi, and Süleymaniyeli Ahmed Efendi were also appointed. The names of the others who were appointed with the salaries of 100 kuruş were Hacı Muhammed Emin Efendi, the Mufti of Süleymaniye district, Dileceli Hacı Molla Ahmed, Molla Ahmed el-Basrâvî, Kânî Kûhli, Molla Ali, Ciyârî Şeyh Sâlih, Hermenî Molla Sâlih, Yalkâdrî Molla Muhammed Emin, Dehlezî Molla Resül, Gazbânî Şeyh Abdurrahman, Baba Ali, Molla Emin Mâm Rüstem, Molla Ahmed, Molla Kadir, and Şeyh İmam Muhammed Efendi. In addition, a monthly salary of 300 kuruş was given to Ayşe Hanım, an elderly relative of Shaikh Said Efendi.[292] Nearly three years later, in 30 November 1897, more Sunni scholars were chosen through the office of Şeyhülisam and appointed with monthly salaries of 2,000 kuruş. Their names were Harputlu Abdurrahman Efendi, Karacaklı Muhammed Lütfi Efendi, Malatyalı Ömer Hulusi Efendi, Kırşehirli Muhammed Tahir Efendi, and Urfalı Abbas Efendi.[293] Both the names and their affiliations show that the central authority was carrying out this policy through using a network of accredited ulema,

[291] BOA, İ.HUS 4/Ra/1313 (24 August 1895); BOA, İ.ML 6, 6/Ra/1313 (26 August 1895); BOA, Y.PRK.MŞ. 6/18, 20/Ş/1313 (4 February 1896).
[292] BOA, İ.ML., 26/Za/1311 (30 May 1894).
[293] BOA, İ.HUS 17, 6/B1315 (30 November 1897).

whether brought from Anatolia or selected from the Iraqi region under the supervision of Shaikh Said Efendi.

The Ottoman officials were advised to take some Shi'i students in the early stages of their childhood, one by one or two by two, and send them to Ezher University in Cairo, providing them with necessary financial support. Ottomans anticipated that those students would have turned into "true" believers since the "heresy" had not yet been deeply ingrained in their minds. Ottoman officials also expected that those students might come back to their homelands within eight or ten years and then began to teach their fellow men the principles of Sunnism. In this context, Ottoman counter-propaganda was suggested to use the successful example of the methods of American missionaries who converted many of the Armenian lower classes to Protestantism through the indoctrination of Protestantism to Armenians and turning them into preachers and teachers of this religion. It was thought that this method would yield better results than taking harsh measures.[294]

Kamil Paşa, Sadrazam was advised to take some Shi'i children to Istanbul for the purpose of education in the Sunni faith. Afterwards, they would be returned to their homelands as Sunnis and work in the service of the government while receiving regular salaries for educating their fellow men in the Sunni faith.[295] Thus, twelve students from the Baghdad province were brought to Istanbul in 1891. During the first days of their visit to Istanbul, the students stayed at the accommodation of *Bâb-ı Vâlây-ı Meşîhatpenâhî* (office of the Şeyhülislam) until more permanent housing was located. They were to be educated by the office of Şeyhülislam (*Dâire-i Meşîhât-i İslâmiyye*). They were well taken care of and had no need of new clothing. Nevertheless, they were out of money. Thus, 100 *kuruş* was given to each student as

[294] BOA, Irade Dahiliyye 96880, 14/Z/1308 (20 July 1891).
[295] BOA, Y.PRK.BŞK 22/62, 15/B/1308 (23 February 1891).

pocket money and 300 kuruş was assigned to each student as a monthly stipend. Then they were assigned to teachers at the Fatih Medresesi. It was ordered that they should be educated in a manner that would prompt them to forsake the Shi'i creed and adopt Sunnism.[296]

In the following year, due to the activities of Mirza Hasan Shirazi, the influence of Sunni education in Samarra seemed lessening to the Ottomans. As a result, the Ottoman officials appointed eight Sunni teachers to Atabat and one to Samarra in 1892. The Ottomans estimated that Shirazi was annually receiving 10,000 liras from India in addition to the abundant sums of money coming from Iran. Those funds were allocated for paying salaries of the Shi'i Akhunds and the stipends of students. According to the Ottoman authorities, there were at least 500 employed Akhunds and students in Samarra benefiting from the ignorance of tribesmen and of the absence of Sunni ulema. The report specifically highlighted the current propagative activities of Shi'is over the Shammar and Anaze tribes, which had long remained loyal to Sunnism. The solution to this, following the other advice, would be to send 100 students, endowing them with 100 kuruş each. Thus, the total cost of the stipends would reach to 100,000 kuruş, which was nearly one third of taxes from the funerary revenues of the Atabat.[297]

The educational counter-propaganda sometimes drew the Ottoman government into paradoxical situations. For instance, the government allowed foreigners to open schools and, since Muslim students were not permitted to enroll these schools, there was no problem. However, when the same authorization was given to the Iranian Shi'is, Muslim students could not be deprived of enrolling in those schools. They were Muslims, but Shi'is; and this contradicted the counter-

[296] BOA, Y.PRK.BŞK 24/66, 21/Ca/1309 (22 December 1891). See also Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 99.
[297] BOA, Y.MTV 73/71, 9/C/1310 (28 December 1892).

propaganda, leaving the officials seriously baffled.[298] It is clear that the Ottoman government was trying to increase the number of Sunni students in the Iraqi region. However, in doing this, they were also conscripting children from among the Sunni students themselves, unless they were appointed as registered müderrises (*müderris-nişîn*). Sayyid Derviş Ali Rıza, a Councilor of the office of Şeyhülislam (*Müsteşâr-I Meşîhat*), regarded the conscription of these students as a discouraging factor while running the counter-propaganda, especially when compared with their Shi'i counterparts, who received sufficient sums of money.[299]

It is interesting to note that the Ottoman authorities placed great emphasis on and trust in the transformative power of a book. Sadrazam offered the publication of an a*kâid kitabı*, a book outlining the doctrines of the religious faith that would attract the Muslim population living in Iraq. As there is no evidence to demonstrate whether this book was actually published or not, assuming, however, that it would have been. The book contained one chapter for each community mentioned below to refute the tenets of their beliefs depending on Shari'a and reason and covered various other subjects as well. The book was expected, in accordance with its purpose, to challenge Shi'ism's various branches such as Usuli, Shaykhi, Akhbari, Bektaşi, Aliyyüllahi, and Nasiri interpretations of Twelver Shi'ism; Ziri, Ismaili, Babi factions of Imamism; and further continue to challenge Wahhabism, Ebahism, Durzi, Mülhidin-i Sûfiyye, and Avdetism. In addition, the book was planned to challenge a small group of people who deviated from the "true" path because of the influence of European

[298] BOA, Y.PRK.A 11/58 4/M/1315 (4 June 1897).
[299] BOA, Y.PRK.MŞ 5/68, 3/Ra/1312 (3 October 1894).

philosophy. This a*kâid kitabı* should emphasize the divergent points of various superstitious beliefs from the "true" one.[300]

Similarly, the guidance of a catechism (*ilm-i hal* book) aimed to correct the beliefs of those Kurds who had "strayed" from the "true" path. They would have been "put back on the straight and narrow by the printing and distribution of 'religious guides' (*ilm-i hal*) which would be printed in Turkish and Kurdish and would be distributed among them."[301] Accordingly, Osman Paşa, the Vali of Mosul, "asked for 300 books of ancient sayings (*Kelam-ı Kadim*), 700 primary school readers and 700 pamphlets teaching Islamic beliefs, for the instruction of the children of the Yezidi and Şebekli who had converted to Hanefi belief."[302]

It is also necessary to mention here some examples of the non-educational activities and practices of the Ottoman officials, which were employed as a precaution to the Shi'i Question. Indeed, the Ottoman counter-propaganda did not necessarily intend to regain the believers or correct the beliefs of those converted to Shi'ism. Their measures sometimes were defensive in tone as to protect those remaining Sunnis from the threat of the "heretic" interpretation of faith.[303] On the other hand, Ottomans occasionally hesitated to perform serious changes but rather to modify certain things as painlessly as possible and then settle the problem in its place. On one occasion, one thousand households of Talas, a bordering town of Russia, sought refuge from the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, they had been happy where they were living. However, the Shi'i torture, according to their claims as reflected to the Ottoman official documentation, was the main reason behind their asylum

[300] BOA, Y.A.HUS 260/130, 28/L/1309 (25 May 1892). See for the opinions of some other Ottoman officials on the publication of this *Akâid Kitabı* Deringil, "A Study in Ottoman Counter-Propaganda," 64.
[301] Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 81-2.
[302] Ibid, 73.
[303] BOA, Y.MTV 59/41, 19/B/1309 (17 February 1892).

request. The Sublime Porte was willing to accept this request, but with two conditions: first, they themselves would have to cover the expanses of their migration; and second, their movement to the Ottoman lands should not give any harm to the diplomatic relations between the Ottoman and Iranian governments. In addition to these stipulations, the Ottoman government was aware of the fact that Iranians would not allow such mass movements to take place; therefore, they warned the Sunni inhabitants of Talas that if the Iranian government posed any preventive measure on their road to the Ottoman lands, they would not be able to do anything.[304] Although the Ottoman government was very keen on spreading Sunnism at the expense of Shi'ism within their borders and protecting the Sunnis under pressure outside of their borders, this time, their hesitations seemed very clear.

Further analysis is necessary to understand the complexities and the range of the Ottoman counter-propaganda in the eastern provinces of the Empire. Though needing to be compared with and confirmed by other sources, it is interesting to note that Agha Khan claimed that some Bektasi preachers were working in the service of the Ottoman government at exactly the same time when the government was running systematic counter-propaganda against the spread of Shi'ism. Agha Khan informed the British Councilor, Lorimer, in 1901 that there were "some itinerant preachers, Bektashis, [who] had in recent years visited northern central Arabia. But they had obtained little success among the people and were suspected to be in reality political emissaries of the Porte."[305] However, contrary to the claim of Agha Khan, Colonel

[304] BOA, Y.A.HUS 311/6, 20/R/1312 (20 October 1894).
[305] FO195/2338, Document No: 97/4, 1910. The document describes these Bektaşis as people "who belonged to a pantheistic Mohammedan order and who were said to be numerous in European and Asiatic Turkey."

Ali bin Hüseyin warned the Porte about the urgent necessity of transporting Bektaşis to another province since they had a strong penchant for and love of Shi'ism.[306]

5.1 Scholarly Quality of the Ulema

The Ottoman government was advised to appoint *ulema* who had an acquaintance with the exegesis of the Qur'an, the hadith of the prophet, and the true tenets of the faith (*akaid*). Furthermore, the ulema should be chosen from amongst those who are sound-minded and well experienced, in addition to having the special talent of eloquence in preaching. The appointed ulema were advised to be careful about how to penetrate into the places where Shi'is constituted the majority. As a caution, they were warned never to introduce themselves as the government appointees, though, in fact, they were. They were advised rather to behave as if they themselves moved to Iraq being independent Sunni scholars demonstrating their purpose with the intention of spreading learning among the ignorant (illiterate) people. They were to call people to pray as a congregation in mosques, teach them to read the Qur'an in the proper manner, and dispense with the basic religious knowledge for daily life. The Sunni ulema in Iran also were to acquaint themselves with the science of refutation to dispute the Shi'i Akhunds on certain matters. They were advised to behave in a moderate fashion when arguing with those Akhunds. They were never to use an aggressive, agitated, or emotional language, but rather behave as a good host treating their guests well. They were to reveal only enough evidences to support the argument at hand. Each member of the ulema was to be paid at least two thousand liras, which was the least amount of money that allowed them to maintain their livelihood. To finance those ulema, it was thought that the

[306] BOA, Y.PRK.MYD 23/18, 1317 (27 August 1899).

necessary revenue could be extracted from the privy purse of the Sultan (*miri muqataa*) to be assigned as funds for their salaries.[307]

Ottoman authorities were careful in selecting Sunni ulema. They principally preferred those who had proficiency in scholarly discussions and who had "religiously and politically important and necessary" knowledge of religious sciences such as the exegesis of the Qur'an, the hadith of the prophet, and the Islamic theology (*kelam*). The ulema were to educate Sunni students who preached the Sunni tenets of faith (*akâid-i ehl-i sünnet*) during the summers by going into the tribes and to the localities of Baghdad and Basra provinces. The ulema, in their activities, were to present various convincing arguments to refute the arguments of the opponent and choose a modest manner to adjust the beliefs (*hüsn-ü tağyîr-i iltizâm*). The ulema, when they confronted with their Shi'i counterparts, were to treat them well and make scholarly discussions using euphemism and adopting a polite language. They were to be careful never to increase the tension and never turn the scholarly discussions into mannerless polemics, even if they felt that the people they preached were not likely to accept their arguments. They were to confine themselves to explain and present their views. Very interestingly, amongst their spiritual duties, the ulema were recommended to secretly inform the provincial government of the Shi'i ulema who were thought to be "dangerous for the religious tranquility of the region" (*diyânete mazarratlarını hisseyledikleri kimseleri*).[308] Ottoman authorities knew that the Sunni ulema they appointed were ignorant of the methods of disputation,[309] whereas the Shi'i ulema were very skillful and talented in scholarly discussions, making scientific judgments, reasoning, and comparisons. Hence, depending on these features, they

[307] BOA, Y.PRK.MK. 4/80, 27/L/1306 (26 June 1889). See also Gökhan Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890-1908*, 110; Selim Deringil, *The Well Protected Domains*, 62.
[308] BOA, Y.EE 9/14.
[309] BOA, Y.A.HUS 260/130 28/L/1309 (5June 1891).

were particularly influential in indoctrinating the Shi'i creed in the non-Shi'i people.[310] Meir stated:

> Shi'i ulema often engaged their Sunni counterparts and Ottoman officials and even Jewish rabbis with polemical disputations in order to prove the superiority of their sect. Not surprisingly, according to Shi'i sources, they always had the upper hand, leading to the conversion of their rivals to Shi'ism.[311]

Alusizade also offered that the appointed Sunni ulema should have knowledge of religious sciences and of the philosophy of Islamic jurisprudence.[312] The ulema sent to Najaf, Karbala, and Samarra, were expected to be equipped with special qualities such as "having high degree of morality, being closely familiar with the Islamic law and methodology, being suitable for education, and being informed of politics."[313] Similarly, they needed a working knowledge of the foreign affairs.[314]

The Ottoman administration vacillated between selecting the ulema from the scholars of the Iraqi region and from the other parts of the Middle Eastern territory. Assigning local ulema had some advantages as that of being familiar with the local language and customs in addition to the demanded qualities that of being "well versed in political subtleties as well as religious dogma."[315] Thus, they appointed ulema with sufficient salaries through selecting from amongst the Iraqi ulema with the purpose of correcting the beliefs of tribesmen. However, the Sunni ulema's activities did fully achieve the set aims both due to their ignorance of the methods of refutation and lack of a comprehensive book. Henceforth, another cohort of ulema was to be chosen from other provinces, this time not from amongst the Iraqis. They were to be acquainted with Arabic, Persian, or Kurdish. Hence, they could translate

[310] BOA, Y.PRK.MYD 23/18, 1317 (1900).
[311] Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of nineteenth-century Iraq*, 132.
[312] BOA, Y.EE. 8/9.
[313] BOA, Y.MTV 43/114 23/R/1307 (16 December 1889).
[314] BOA, Y.PRK.AZJ 17/81, 11/M/1308 (26 August 1890).
[315] Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 72. For the suggestions of a former Şeyhülislam, Mehmet Cemaleddin Efendi on the special qualities of a scholar see also Deringil, "A Study in Ottoman Counter Propaganda," 66.

the texts into other languages such as Turkish, Persian, Kurdish, Arabic, and even French. Then they would have the opportunity to prevent the spread of not only Shi'ism but also Protestantism.[316] The Ottoman administration paid special attention to selecting the ulema member who were of Syrian, Aleppo or Harameyn origin. In any condition, they should have been Arabs or, if they were chosen from amongst the Sunni scholars of Baghdad, their prominence and qualities were to be carefully contested.[317]

It was understood later that the Sunni preachers in Baghdad who were employed by the Ottoman authorities were not only ignorant of the basic knowledge of Arabic but also did not fulfill their duties. Instead, some of them engaged in cultivation in their gardens that they likely bought with the salaries paid by the government. The local kadi court (*merkez neyâbet şer'iyyesi*) was advised to make necessary admonitions to those preachers.[318] Another report states that some previously appointed scholars could not accomplish their duties since they were familiar neither with the language nor with the dispositions of the local people. Thus, they were dismissed from their duties and sent to Mosul.[319]

5.2 Financial Deficiency and Failure of the Educational Counter-Propaganda

The education policy faced failure, even in the initial stages of its implementation. Owing mostly to the financial deficiency and the lack of educated Sunni scholars, reports, complaining of the existing situation, began to reach the central authority, causing overwhelming frustration. Efforts to introduce the modern education system throughout the empire faced actual constraints. According to

[316] BOA, Y.A.HUS 260/130 28/L/1309 (5June 1891).
[317] BOA, Y.EE 9/14.
[318] BOA, DH.MKT 1143/13, 9/Z/1324 (23 January 1907).
[319] BOA, Y.PRK.BŞK 79/71, 4/Za/1326 (27 December 1908).

Deringil, "the most basic was money. Although all local administrations were expected to contribute a share of their revenues as the 'education budget' (*maarif hissesi*), very often this money was not forthcoming, and schools were not built and teachers left unpaid." [320]

Thus, the modern educational system was suffering from lack of financial funds. In 1890, teachers at a primary school in Yemen complained about their unpaid salaries. Similarly, in the same year in Baghdad, sufficient funds could not be raised from the 'charitable persons' to support education in a local secondary school. Nine years later, in Kastamonu in Anatolia, funds were hardly raised by "the parents of the pupils providing a certain proportion of their agricultural yield at each harvest."[321] According to Alusizade Ahmed Şakir, the educational propaganda of the government achieved nothing except troubling the state treasury.[322] Newly established medreses in the Dir district in the province of Zor could not properly function due to the lack of sufficient financial sources.[323]

One of the reasons behind the weakening of Sunni religious education was the loss of vakf revenues supporting the Sunni madrasas due to the Tanzimat's centralization policies.[324] Therefore, in order to restore the Sunni education, all the vakfs in the region would be located, their conditions be improved, and be reclaimed for the Ottoman government. The Ottoman officials realized that vakfs were passing from one hand to another for many years through inheritance or purchase, which was contrary to the Islamic judicial regulations. The existing vakf holders had in their hands *vakfiyye*s whose statues remained valid. However, the government officials tried to legalize and justify the appropriation of vakfs on behalf of those who bid

[320] Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 107.
[321] Ibid, 107.
[322] BOA, Y.EE. 8/9, 11/S/1312 (15 August 1894).
[323] BOA, Y.MTV 245/87, 11/Ra/1321 (6 June 1903).
[324] Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890-1908*, 101.

first. They then deemed to reorganize those wakfs in a conformable manner through constituting a commission composed of the chief accountant of the vakfs of the Baghdad province and the Directory of Education (*Bağdad Evkâfı Muhsebecisi ve Maarif Müdîriyeti*).[325]

The financial deficiency was the most significant obstacle preventing the implementation of reforms in the provinces of Baghdad and Basra. The financial sources were so sparse that "the Sultan's government had no money of its own to spare for such reforms and with memories of the 1875 bankruptcy still fresh, it was unwilling to resort to large scale foreign loans."[326] Three provinces of Iraq were producing 6.5 percent of the total of agricultural taxes, which amounted to 47.3 million kuruş and 8.1 percent of the livestock taxes amounted to 16.5 million kuruş, collected in the Empire between 1909-1910. However, what was tragic for the educational activity was that "approximately two-thirds of the revenues of the Iraqi provinces were derived from agricultural and livestock taxes, and that about two-thirds of expenditure went to the army and the gendarmerie."[327]

In an imperial decree forwarded in 1901, it was decided to allocate 500 kuruş for each scholar serving the medreses in the province of Basra. For the allowances of the Sunni ulema, the local government was advised to extract money from the funerary taxes of Karbala. If that sum was not enough, then funds were to be taken from the Treasury of Finance, and if not enough again, then taken from the Sultan's Privy Purse. However, the province of Basra was annually receiving 254,882 kuruş for its educational activities. 128,080 kuruş of that total was spent for the repairs of old or the constructions of new primary and secondary schools whereas rest of the total budget, 126,802 kuruş, was spent for the standard expenditures of some schools

[325] BOA, Y.PRK.MK. 4/80, 27/L/1306 (26 June 1889).
[326] Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890-1908*, 148.
[327] Ibid, 17.

in Basra. Therefore, the new funding source for the ulema's salary could be extracted neither from the funerary taxes nor from Imperial Educational Donations (*Maarif-i Hâssa İânesi*) and could hardly be extracted from the education allowances of The Department of Imperial Finance (*Hazîne-i Celîle-i Mâliyye*).[328] Ten years later, the office of Şeyhülislam asked the Department of Evkaf for financial aid for Shaikh Muhammed Hamid Ömeri Efendi and Müderris Sayyid Molla Hasan Efendi, both of whom belonged to the Naksibendi order and engaged in Sunni education to thwart the spread of Shi'ism on the Ottoman-Iranian border. The Evkaf Department regretfully explained the impossibility of covering the demanded expenses. (*şeyh-i mümâ ileyhe maaş tahsisine müsâid karşuluk olmadığı cihetle hazînece birşey yapmağa imkan olmadığına*).[329] In sum, the financial deficiency was among the primary reasons for the failure of the Ottoman educational counter-propaganda against the spread of Shi'ism.

Complicating the situation, educational structures were quite deteriorated to the point that highly intellectual and knowledgeable scholars could not be trained in the medreses. Even in the early stages of the implementation of the counter-propaganda, in the 1880s for instance, the Ottoman officials realized that the influence of the Shi'i mujtahids was spreading beyond Baghdad, and even penetrating to Hakkari and Mosul. Ottoman officials had already taken a decision to appoint Sunni ulema to educate people on the "true" tenets of faith and to protect them against the threat of Shi'i doctrine. The local Ottoman authorities were also advised to provide the necessary funds for reorganization and improvement of the Sunni education in Atabat. However, the previously appointed Sunni scholars to

[328] BOA, Irade Maarif 1, 4/Za/1318 (22 February 1901). It is interesting to see that local merhants and notables of Basra asked the central government for the appointment of Şeyh Abdullah Peşâverî Efendi as the head of scholar in Basra.
[329] BOA, DH.İA 33/39, 29/Ş/1330 (12 August 1912).

Baghdad were not properly fulfilling their duties. They neither were competent *(nâ-ehl)* nor carried out their duties.[330] Although it was repeatedly recommended for two years in the *Mutasarrıflık* and *Kaymakamlık* that the establishment of medreses and mosques was necessary to save the region, nothing had been done.[331]

Another facet of the education policy, which was not mentioned above, was addressing the Christian missionary activities. Thus, one of the primary purposes of extending Sunni education came to be a reactionary struggle against the presence of Christian missionaries since they were regarded by the sultan as "the most dangerous enemies to the existing social order."[332] Ottoman efforts to spread Sunnism, by no means accidentally, coincided with the rise of anti-Christian feelings in Japan and China against the Christian missionary encroachments. However, despite the great efforts of the Sublime State to compete with the missionary schools, the complaints continued to reach the imperial center confessing the insufficiency of the state primary schools when compared with the missionary schools, which were clothing, feeding and paying for the students. [333] The same reasons were cited for the failure in halting the spread of Shi'ism.

The demands of the central government were responded to with complaints. Vefik Ismet Paşa pointed out in 1890 that Shi'ism had become deeply ingrained in people's minds.[334] Neither the educational measures nor other strategies could achieve anything.[335] The government could not establish enough authority over the ulema that were working for their own livelihoods rather than engaging with scholarly activities on behalf of the Ottoman Empire. They began to work as public

[330] BOA, MV. 1/26, 22/R/1302 (7 April 1885).
[331] BOA, Y.PRK.ASK 72/80, 18/Ca/1309 (19 December 1891).
[332] Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 114.
[333] Ibid, 112-16.
[334] BOA, Y.MTV 45/13, 7/M/1308 (22 August 1890). He further suggested to gain the favour of Shi'is on behalf of the Ottoman Empire.
[335] BOA, İ.ML 6, 6/Ra/1313 (24 October 1895).

prosecutors (*müddeî-i umûmî*) or tried to embed themselves into the braches the local judiciaries.[336] Commander Ali bin Hüseyin al-Fath noted that there were only two noteworthy ulema in the environs of the Baghdad province.[337] Muhammed Arif Bey, Ottoman Consular at Tehran, reported that both the methods and policy to prevent the spread of Shi'ism could not achieve the required outcomes.[338] Thus, Ottoman authorities gave up the policy of sending itinerant preachers and hodjas to the Shi'i dominant regions of Iraq around 1906. This decision was summed up in a report prepared by the Interior Ministry complaining of the inefficiency of their activities and instead proposing the spread of sciences and education within institutionalized forms.[339]

[336] BOA, Y.PRK.ASK 78/20, 18/Ca/1309 (19 December 1891).
[337] BOA, Y.PRK.MYD 23/18, 1317 (1900). According to his account, Numan Efendi was Wahhabi so that he could help the government with the counter-propaganda. It is interesting that the commander argued that Numan Efendi could not help them since Wahhabism was among the bitter enemies of Shi'ism.
[338] BOA, Y.EE 10/69.
[339] Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890-1908*, 123.

CHAPTER 6

SOCIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN SHI'IS AND SUNNIS OF IRAQ IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, the predominantly rigorous and rapid modernization of the Middle Eastern societies was accelerated by the strong internal and external governmental cohesions. Both in the meanings and the functions of certain concepts, such as the interpretation of religion and the place of a leader in society, began a remarkable change. As a bilateral and highly complex process, state involvement in public affairs increased along with the escalation of public participation to government issues. In this context, the spread of Shi'ism primarily arose from the changes within the loosely defined social groups that were going through a process of internal consolidation and homogenization. Therefore, it is an interesting question how the relationships between different social groups, whether tribally or religiously defined, were affected by these changes. In this chapter, some aspects of the social relations between the Shi'is and Sunnis of Iraq in the late nineteenth century will be discussed mostly reliant on the official administrative documentation of the Ottoman and British governments. First, the Muharram Commemorations will be presented as the times in which sectarian social tensions grew stronger. As the relationship between the Iraqi Shi'is and the Sunni

government authorities constituted an important aspect of these social relationships, the Samarra Incident, as a socio-political issue, will be discussed in the last part of this chapter.

Before entering into the debate, it is necessary to make a brief comment about the utilization of governmental documents. Indeed, understanding the influence of sectarian affiliations in social relations through official documentation creates a serious problem in that historical events will have a government bias. The records of law courts, in this regard, are better sources since they refer to the actual agents of specific events and offer precise information about real situations. However, the use of law court records is beyond the limits of this study. Nevertheless, since the accurate information is of importance in terms of state governance, the value of the official documentation about particular events may also present an opportunity to understand some of the motives behind the social psychology both within the different segments of society and between the social groups and the state. In other words, as long as the state officials regarded them as important cases, then it is possible that these events were described without deliberate distortions.

6.1 Conflicting Visions: The Muharram Commemorations

Muharram commemorations were the traditional public ceremonies in memory of the slaughter of Imam Hasan and Imam Hussein, Prophet Muhammad's grandsons. The commemorations conveyed conflicting visions. They presented an opportunity for providing a certain sense of syncretism as well as increasing hatred and antagonism within and between the followers of diverse denominations. These commemorations could also carry the potential for social protest and unrest by the ordinary attendees or by those performing the rituals. As the anti-government action

and passive disobedience to any form of political authority was two of the main themes of the Shi'i political tradition, these sermons provided an impetus for Shi'i social protests, which easily broke out especially against government officials. In Iran *the Rawza-Khwan*, the preachers running the Muharram procession and fulfilling the function of a Mu'min in the Iraqi Shi'i society, could stress "the current socio-economic grievances of the population, to mobilize people for political action"[340] and provoke inter-communal strife. However, the implications of these remembrance ceremonies were highly complex.

The *ta'ziya* tradition was a religious ritual and connected to the Muharram commemorations. On the one hand, according to Algar, the high "potentiality of the ta'ziya for the inspiration of the revolt has moved several Iranian statesmen and governments to work for its abolition; concern for its possible illegitimacy in terms of religious law and precedent has been secondary."[341] On the other hand, Arjomand argued that there were two ranks in the Iranian hierocracy. Lower ranks were generally poorly educated and consisted of diverse groups led by rustic Molla and Rawda-Khans. Ta'ziya was among the activities of that lower hierocracy and was promoted and sponsored by the ruling Qajar elite whereas its development was opposed by "the jurists in the upper echelons of the [Shi'i] hierocracy."[342] Arjomand, quoting Calamard, emphasized that "the spread of ta'zieh enhanced the political domination of the monarchy and the patrons among the nobility who controlled this branch of religious activity." However, though it was hesitated by the upper Shi'i ulema, the ta'zieh functional as a motive of "communal oppositional action."[343]

[340] Naqash, *Shi'is of Iraq*, 159-60.
[341] Hamid Algar, "The Oppositional Role of the Ulema in the Twentieth Century Iran," in N.R. Keddie, *Scholars, Saints and Sufis*, 234.
[342] S.A. Arjomend, "The Shi'ite Hierocracy and the State in the Pre-Modern Iran," 69.
[343] S.A. Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 240-41.

The Muharram processions were widely introduced in Iraq in the nineteenth century. Previously, the Mamluk governors of Iraq had forbidden these proceedings in cities such as Baghdad, Basra, Kazimayn, and Samarra where their control was effective. The Shi'is of Iraq, whether of Persian or Ottoman origin, were not allowed to proceed Muharram commemorations until the establishment of Ottoman authority and direct control in Iraq in 1831. Yet again, after couple of decades, in the 1870's Midhad Pasha and Ahmad Shakir al-Alusi attempted to restrict the Muharram rites since they provided a psychological stimulus to Shi'i Mujtahids and *Akhund*s,[344] mostly under the pretext of taking security measures to pre-empt possible public unrest and social antagonisms.

When compared to the Muharram commemorations of Iran performed in a highly professional and theatrical manner, the commemorations in Iraq were less professionally organized, but integrated the local participants more into the play. The plays in Iraq, in conformity with the intense tribal structure of the Iraqi society, focused on braveness as a central theme of the play and highlighting the strong physical attributes of certain players such as the image of Abbas, Hussein's half-brother.[345]

In northern India, the Muharram sessions, to some extent, helped to develop a trans-communal society. The scripturalist strictly religious Brahmins, opposed the Hindus participation in the commemorations. Interestingly, when fighting broke out in Sunni-ruled Hyderabad between Muslims and Hindus during the commemorations, the participant Hindus could "actually take the Muslim side against their coreligionists."[346] Similarly, "boundaries between religious communities existed, and fighting occurred between Hindu and Muslim or Sunni and

[344] Naqash, *Shi'is of Iraq*, 142-43.
[345] Ibid., 142-49.
[346] Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq,* 116.

Shi'i. However, to a greater extent in the early nineteenth century, cultural mediators, such as Sufi the pirs who transmitted symbols from one group to another drawing their clientele from both Muslim and Hindu, linked popular-class groups."[347] Sunni groups and others, did not embrace Shi'ism, did adopt the rituals in a different manner, and celebrated the Shi'i figures and Shi'i holy days. For instance, the "Sunni Shopkeepers of the Ranki caste commemorated Muharram, the Shi'i month of mourning for Imam Hussein, by getting drunk. The Sunnis of Dalmau held a fair at Muharram, which 6.000 people attended annually."[348]

The Muharram ceremonies, despite increased communal solidarity among the Shi'is, also strengthened and highlighted the sectarian distinctions between the Sunnis and Shi'is. Even if Sunni Muslims had a penchant to participate in the Muharram ceremonies, either their attendance or reactions to the rituals were dissimilar to their Shi'i brethren. As in the north Indian experience, particularly the practices in Shi'i Awadh, showed that:

> The Sunni Muslims in Awadh in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries also held mourning sessions, but frowned on the breast-beating and the ritual cursing of the Shi'is. The Sunnis, likewise, participated in the Muharram processions, but in various ways differentiated themselves from the Shi'is. For instance, although the latter held up five fingers to symbolize the Prophet's immediate family, the Sunnis would hold up three fingers for the first three caliphs.[349]

Although attracting large numbers of Sunnis and Hindus and functioning as a unifying factor, there were frequent outbreaks of violence since the establishment of the Shi'i Awadh government as an independent state in 1819. Depending on the policies of rulers or the religious elites in the nineteenth century Awadh, many commemorations celebrated in the large cities ended in bloodshed. Particularly, the public cursing of the first three caliphs during the commemorations had become one

[347] Ibid., 115.
[348] Ibid., 88-92.
[349] Ibid., 115.

of chronic sources of social tension. Thus, the Sunnis were actively persecuted by the military forces of Shi'i Awadh government.[350]

The attitudes of the Ottoman government officers and ordinary Sunni people to the Muharram commemorations were rather different. The situation in Iraq regarding the Muharram ceremonies, though changing in accordance with the perceptions whether of ordinary people of government officials, was not as adamant as in North India after the establishment of the Shi'i Awadh State. The ordinary Sunni people were disturbed by these commemorations in Iraq, but overwhelmingly the Sunni Ottoman officers were suspicious about the performance of rituals and wished to forestall the subsequent social events. While the Sunni families were going to the Commemoration places to watch the plays and other rituals, the Ottoman officials skeptically monitored them. For example, Major Ali bin Hüseyin al-Fath, Aide-de-Camp to the Sultan, observed one of the Muharram commemorations in Iraq. He considered the commemoration culture of Shi'is, in general, as "amongst their shameful deeds and customs and heretic demonstrations" (*Şiîlerin cümle-i âdât-ı kabîhalarından bid'at-ı şebîhler [ve] nümâyişler icrâsı*). Interestingly, he did not advise abolishing the Muharram commemorations; instead, he suggested preventing the audience from attending these commemorations. He presumed that Shi'is were chiefly giving importance to these rituals because of the non-Shi'i people who were coming to watch them. Then, he calculated that if the audience were prevented from attending then this would decrease the importance of the rituals in the eyes of the Shi'is themselves thus the commemorations would eventually lose their political and social importance.[351]

[350] Ibid., 239-40.
[351] BOA, Y.PRK.MYD 23/18, 1317 (1899).

Major Hüseyin al-Fath mentioned in general about Shi'i commemoration, however, it is not known towards whom his skepticism was directed. There were different ethnic identities in the Shi'i populations in Iraq. During the public processions, their attitudes varied in accordance with their governmental affiliations. In Ottoman Iraq, "the Persian participants used to perform before the Iranian consul-general, thereby stressing their Persian identity and strong sense of community. The Arabs, in contrast, used to act before the custodian of the shrine, who was a government nominee."[352] Therefore, the mistrust of the Major, though seeming to be aggravating, was not groundless.

On the eleventh day of Muharram, Esad Bey, Lieutenant Colonel in the General Military Staff at Baghdad (*Bağdad Erkân-ı Harbiyye Kâimmakâmı*), reported two events to the Porte. These events happened one after the other, deeply upsetting the believers. On the seventh day of Muharram, some unemployed Shi'i youths made an effigy of Ayşe, wife of the Prophet Muhammad and walked it around the streets as an insult, a symbolic value of the Sunni faith. Furthermore, on the tenth day of Muharram, the day of commemoration, these Shi'i youths assaulted some people of the prophet's descent serving in the mosque of Imam Musa al-Kadhim.[353]

A similar kind of social antagonism was observed by Muhammed Arif Bey, the Ottoman Consul at Tehran. He reported that although Muharram sermons were not customary in Iranian Kurdistan, particularly in the districts of Sakız and Bâne, following the appointment of Amir-i Nizam to the government of Iranian Kurdistan the commemorations began and they were sponsored by Gulam Hüseyin Khan, a relative of Amir-i Nizam. However, according to the claims of Muhammad Arif Bey, the Sunni inhabitants in both districts were agitated by the news and attacked the

[352] Naqash, *Shi'is of Iraq*, 151.
[353] BOA, Y.PRK.ASK 161/19, 11/M/1318 (10 May 1910). From Esad Bey, Bağdad Erkân-ı Harbiyye Kâimmakâmı to the Sublime Porte

house where the attendees of the commemoration were gathered. Some of the attendees were killed and others were severely beaten. Following this, the situation became more complicated. The mother of Amir-i Nizam wanted revenge and went to a Sayyid to certify that 3.000 *tuman* belonging to her had been stolen during the affray. Furthermore, she instigated the detainment of a girl in the government prison until repayment of the money. The girl was the daughter of a disciple of Shaykh Mustafa Efendi who was supposed to have been involved in the event. This stirred the inhabitants of the district once more; they attacked the government building, rescued the girl, looted the belongings of the governor, and killed nearly thirty Persian officers. Gulam Hüseyin Khan and the mother of Amir-i Nizam were sent away. Thus, the district was out of the control of the Iranian officers for some time.[354]

The places for Muharram commemorations served as a public arena where diverse segments of society gathered and communicated with each other. Thus, on one hand, they helped to increase the communal solidarity primarily among Shi'is, but on the other, during the Muharram commemorations it appeared that sectarian divergences occurred. Although the commemorations sometimes revealed the sectarian distinctions, the Sunni Ottomans living in the Shi'i dominated districts attended the commemorations with their families However, in keeping with their suspicions about any *foreign* activity, local Ottoman officials vigilantly monitored the commemorations and tried to prevent Ottoman subjects from attending.

[354] BOA, Y.PRK. EŞA 18/78, 19/R/1311 (29 October 1893).

6.2 The Shi'i Socio-Political Protest

Islam was founded on a protest movement, according to Lewis, the Prophet Muhammad himself was "an oppositional leader" who struggled against the existing authority. Later, the revolutionary practice of early Islamic history was adopted in different frameworks, one of which was Shi'ism.[355] In this context, Shi'ism had partly begun with a protest against the political authority, which was thought to have usurped the legitimate right of Imam Ali and of his descendents'. The movements of protest became one of the central and traditional manifestations of Shi'i political activism. The messianic idea of the occulted Imam provided an enduring expectation of the return of justice and the disappearance of oppression.[356] In comparison with "Sunnism [which] associated with status quo, Shi'ism [associated] with a rejection of status quo, often though not necessarily accompanied by a determination to change it."[357]

Hanna Batatu, generalizing the theoretical view of the Shi'i jurisprudence about the right to political authority and presenting historical practices conjunctively with this jurisprudential generalization, argued that the relations between Shi'is and Sunnis in Iraq, but particularly between the Sunni Ottoman government and its Shi'i subjects, were uneasy. Batatu wrote that "to the strict Shi'is the government of the day- the government of the Ottoman Sultan that led Sunni Islam- was, in its essence,

[355] Bernard Lewis, "The Shi'a in Islamic History," in Martin Kramer, *Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution*, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1987), 25-26.

[356] Juan R.I. Cole and Nikki Keddie. (Editors) *Shi'ism and Social Protest*, (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1986), 4. However, it should also be noted that the culture of dissent was not inherent in the Shi'i political philosophy. There were two challenging opinions: the political quietism as endorsed by the Imams themselves and the political activism occasionally manifested in certain historical context such as the cooperation of Nasiriddin Tusi with the Mongol ruler Hulagü or later the collaboration of the Shi'i ulema with the Safavid government. Mangol Bayat, Mysticism and Dissent: Socioreligios Thought in Qajar Iran, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1982), 16-20. Furthermore, according to Arjomand, in Iran "in the second half of the nineteenth century, the dependence of the ulema on the king became considerably greater." S.A. Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, 245. Neverhteless, this does not change the fact that the leglality of the oppositional movements to the governmental authority continued its theoretical validity depending on the idea of constant occultation of the twelfth Imam.

[357] Bernard Lewis, "The Shi'a in Islamic History," 29-30.

usurpation."[358] Therefore, the idea of resistance to the political authority caused the formation of a 'tradition of protest' and resistance that led to further implications of the anti-governmental motive. This motive became influential in instilling the Shi'i creed into the tribal political structure thus redressing their political visions. It seems feasible to argue that the sectarian affiliations were very important in both injecting the anti-governmental motive into the Shi'i politics, which gave the Shi'is a consistent and systematic reason for political resistance, and influencing the political alignments primarily against the Sunni government.

There are examples of the practical manifestations of this motive that demonstrate the consciousness of the Shi'i collective resistance to the Sunni Ottoman authority. Every year during *Nevruz*, many people visited the Place of Ali (*Makâm-ı 'Ali*) near Basra. However, on 12 March 1903, something strange happened, the door of the mosque suddenly opened by itself and this was acknowledged by the visitors as a sign of divine acceptance of their prayers. Henceforth, the news spread very quickly to other towns and various other Shi'i visitors arrived. There was neither a place nor time left for the Sunni Muslims to pray in the mosque, which was used by both Shi'is and Sunnis. However, many of the Shi'i visitors were women who could not be driven out by force. Ottoman officials asked the Shi'i ulema and shaykhs to empty the mosque during the times of prayer. After the prayers, the visits were allowed again. Not to give any occasion to bickering between Shi'is and Sunnis, as a precaution, the Ottoman officials assigned couple of military personnel to duty near the mosque. However, four days later in 16 March 1903, the Shi'i visitors did not listen to their ulema and began to "invade" the mosque. On Friday morning, they broke down the door and entered the mosque. The gendarmerie and police officers

[358] Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 17.

on duty were unable to force the Shi'is from the mosque. Several of the Shi'i visitors were carrying guns and there was an exchange of fire between them and the Ottoman military personnel however, there is no indication in the document as to who fired first. Finally, the visitors were dispersed and subsequently, during Friday prayers, the Sunni Muslims were warned and advised to be calm.[359]

It was understood a little later that the primary intention of the Shi'is was more than a visit. It was chiefly a social protest about the treatment of Mansur Pasha, the Honorary President of the Commission for the Imperial Local Lands of Qatif District. Although the Shi'i ulema knew the real reason, at the time, they said nothing to the Ottoman officials who later understood it from the slogans, which were in Arabic and meant "*Mansur hakkın bizim yedimizden al.*" The central government ordered an investigation, after which it was realized that the event was an outcome of a matter, of which the central government had been informed nearly a month ago by the Mutasarrif of Najd.[360]

This event is very interesting since it shows how a Shi'i social protest was formed. The document does not contest the authenticity of the beginning of the event and remains unknown as to whether the ordinary Shi'i visitors actually saw the door miraculously opening by itself or that the witnesses were the protesters, who invented the event to make their protest more effective. Both are possible the visitors might have thought that it was a miracle and then the protestors seized the opportunity to draw more attention to their cause. If the time span is considered, four days seems to have been enough time to take the advantage of the event. However, both the visitors and the protestors might have been the same people, then, it becomes more likely that the miracle was invented. Whatever the truth of the

[359] BOA, Y.A.RES 120/92, 9/Ra/1321 (4 June 1903).
[360] Ibid.

"miracle," it was primarily a Shi'i social protest that was directed against a local Ottoman officer for his maladministration and blended with a mystical motive attached to the holiness of the Shrine.

Akif Pasha, the governor general of Iraq at Baghdad, informed J.P. Nixon, the British Consul in Baghdad, about the forthcoming Ottoman punishment of the inhabitants of Karbala for their act of rebellion. He warned Nixon to notify their Shi'i Indian subjects to abstain from any interference during the march of the Ottoman troops. Although it is not possible to estimate the potential scale and the content of the unrest, Nixon confirms the antagonism in his report that, "As disturbances in this country are generally founded on the enmity between the two sects of the Sunni and Shi'i Mohammedans, there is always a danger of latter combining against the local authorities."[361] Furthermore, Nixon refers to the seriousness of the conflict, "It seems nearly certain that all the Arabs around the Euphrates and the Hindiyya Canal will rise against Turkish rule, if any of their Shi'ah brethren are killed in the impending hostilities."[362] Nixon's assertion shows the lines of alliances in a possible state of conflict and the boundaries of subjecthood in the late nineteenth century Iraq. The potential revealed by Nixon shows that the Shi'i sectarian creed had the potential to provide a base for collective resistance against the government forces that signified important evidence for the influence of sectarian affiliations.

Another event took place in Khorosan, a province of Iran. The event is important when it is considered in the context of other events that happened in Ottoman Iraq. The Ottoman Consular at Tehran reported that a dispute had emerged between a representative sent by the Vali of Meşhed and an official serving at the shrine of Imam Rıza. The duty of the representative was to pass the orders given by

[361] FO 195/1142, Document No: 33, (14 July 1877)
[362] Ibid.

the Vali to the shrine officials. However, he was insulted and severely attacked by these officials for the reason of passing the order that was the increasing demand of Iranian government from the incomes of the Shrine. Incited by the shrine officials, the news quickly spread to the people of the town, who barricaded the bazaars and shops in rebellion against the Iranian government. Some people had died in this serious rebellion.[363]

It is unknown how the news spread to the people and how they were convinced about the credibility of the information from the shrine officials over that of the representatives of the Vali. The first assumption is that the late nineteenth century social environment of Iraq and Iran shared the fact that individual matters regarding sacred religious figures in people's lives could easily become the basis for the development of more complicated social unrest. This was true even for very trivial circumstances or in cases of minor disputes. This was probably due to the fact that the matters regarding religion were among the most sensitive subjects for the people at that time. In this case, it was motivated by the power of the anti-governmental movement in the Shi'i political tradition that quickened the rebellion against the state officials. This motive, as indicated above, was important in determining the direction of the social activism of the Shi'i people. The cases experienced in different provinces of Iraq illustrate that the spread of Shi'ism was very much supported by the underlying psychological factor. The anti-governmental motive here played a role through replacing the psychological condition of Shi'is as being against a supreme political authority.

In theory, the Shi'is were supposed to be disobedient to any Sunni government. However, the Shi'i Ottoman subjects were communicating with the

[363] BOA, Y.PRK.EŞA 19/57 25/L/1311 (30 April 1894). From Sublime Port to Muhammed Arif Bey, Ottoman Council General at Tehran

Sunni Ottoman government and dispatching petitions to the central authority demanding impartial administration. On one occasion, Shi'i Ottoman subjects complained to Şâkir Efendi, the previous substitute judge of Karbala, because he had written a pamphlet against the Caferi branch of Shi'ism. Presumably, it was due to the content of the pamphlet, which upset the Shi'i Ottoman subjects. Although the Ottoman government was running a counter propaganda campaign against the spread of Shi'ism thus favoring any attempt to promote Sunni Islam, they regarded the pamphlet as "contrary to the regulations" (*muğayir-i nizam*).[364]

The Shi'i Ottoman inhabitants of the Sur district, in the province of Beirut, submitted a petition with 103 signatures to the Porte complaining about the oppressions perpetrated by the Mamluk family. According to their claim, not long before, a man named Yusuf Mamluk began to loot the properties of Shi'is, and violated their lives. Fortunately, Hamdi Pasha, the former Vali of Beirut, put an end to this man's arbitrary abuses however, at the cost of his life. Nevertheless, the oppression of the Shi'is was continued by Yusuf Mamluk's family. They gained the favour of Nasuhi Bey, the next Vali of Beirut, and they were supported by the Mufti of Beirut. The situation for the Shi'is seemed so hopeless that they even asked to migrate to another place in the Empire asking, "Is the oppression of the Mamluk family preferable to the lamentation of 50,000 people living in liberty and enjoying loyalty to the Ottoman government?"[365] The petition was taken to the Internal Affairs Division of the Sublime Porte and was carefully scrutinized.[366] Later, with the telegraph that was received by the Vali of Beirut who, as expected, denied the claims, and the matter was presented to the Sultan.[367]

[364] BOA, DH.MKT 1398/21 13/Ca/1304 (6 February 1887).
[365] BOA, DH.MKT, 413/51, 26/S/1313 (17 August 1895).
[366] BOA, DH.MKT 424/41 19/Ra/1313 (8 September 1895).
[367] BOA, İ.HUS 98, 27/S/1313 (18 August 1895).

Sectarian affiliations were important in injecting both the anti-governmental motive and the idea of collective sectarian resistance into the dissident communal groups in Iraq. The Shi'i sectarian affiliations did not directly lead the Shi'is into a continuous anti-governmental resistance; however, it formed the idea of collective resistance around the identity of Shi'ism. In addition, the Shi'i antagonism was not directed against their Sunni brethren but primarily and concertedly against the dominant political authority. There were also frequently occurring social disputes, minor in character. However, there were important issues, including the Samarra Incident discussed below, illustrating the problematic social and political relationship between the Shi'i and Sunni communities.

6.3 The Samarra Incident: An Analysis of a Social Dispute

"Kill the Indians men of English's state"[368]

In this section, first an event that occurred in 1874 will be described, and then a question be posed that connects this event with the Samarra Incident which happened 20 years later. In 1874, a dispute arose in Baghdad between some Sunni Muslims and two Babis, following a religious discussion near a Sunni masjid. The former blamed the latter for speaking against Islam after which the Babis were beaten up by the Sunni Muslims before the police intervened. However, according to the report of the British Consulate, 61 Babis were arrested and tortured on the road to the prison by both 'the people in the crowd' and by the police officers who were said to had injured those Babis with "the butts of the rifles, sticks, and pieces of pottery." After the arrest, 12 Babis, were immediately released, and 43 were allowed to go free a little later, after renouncing their religion and promising to return home, six

[368] FO 195/1841 Document No: 210/23, (21April 1894) From E. Mockler Colonel, British Consul General at Baghdad To Sir Philip Currie, Ambassador at Constantinople.

remained in prison. Mockler, the reporter, noted that although Babis generally did not speak about their religion, the question as to why they entered into such discussions with the Sunni Muslims near a Masjid remained unanswered. Persecution of the Babis would have caused to unpredictable disturbances since their numbers were considerable in both Iraq and Iran. Thus, were the Sunni Muslims of Baghdad "ever ready to take offence at the smallest doubt on, or slight to, their religious prejudices,"[369] as described by Mockler?

Parallel to Mockler's description of this event, the Samarra Incident, which took place in April 1894, was recognized in the historiography as the most obvious example of the utmost social antagonism between the Sunnis and Shi'is of Iraq. The incident happened, not in Najaf, Karbala, Kazimie, or other cities whose majority of inhabitants were Shi'is but in a city where the majority of the population was Sunni,. The event was seen to be of major importance. Çetinsaya, for instance, described the Samarra Incident as "a serious outbreak … between Sunnis and Shi'is in Samarra." Further, agreeing with the language of the official documentation, he claimed that it was "a petty quarrel … rapidly developed into something like a religious war between Sunnis and Shi'is, in which several people were killed."[370] A similar explanation was given by Litvak Meir.[371] In this thesis reference to archival sources will made in order to discuss the extent to which the Samarra Incident was a socio-religious or a socio-political event.

According to Ottoman official sources, there emerged a simple dispute in 30 April 1894 in Samarra, between a disciple of Mujtahid Mirza Hasan Shirazî and a butcher with an artilleryman in the army who was the butcher's brother. I can be understood from the document that the Shi'i student owed money to the butcher.

[369] FO 195/1030, Document No: 55, (8 August 1874)
[370] Gökhan Çetinsaya, The Ottoman Administration of Iraq, 1890-1908, 113.
[371] Meir Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth Century Iraq*, 167.

Somehow, the dispute became serious and owing to the negligence of the local government, Iranian subjects, and the substitute representative of the Iranians, namely Mirza Mahmud joined with the Shi'i students. Then, the local Sunnis colluded against them. Moreover, during the unrest, Iranian, Indian, British, and Russian Consulates intervened because their nationals were among the students of Mirza Hasan Shirazî.[372] The Ottoman scribe seemed to be much more interested in the intentions of the British. The Ottomans believed that the British intended to seize the opportunity of taking Mirza Hasan Shirazî under control. They assumed that if the British had taken the advantage of the dispute and taken Shirazî, then the Ottoman Empire would be unlikely to retain the control of the Iraqi region.

Confirming the information in the Ottoman documentation, the British sources also demonstrate that the Samarra Incident occurred over a dispute concerning a financial transaction between two individuals belonging to "opposite denominations." According to the report of the British Consulate, the dispute damaged both sides greatly. Verifying the Ottoman anxiety, one of the reasons behind the close interest of the British Consulate in the incident seemed to be the residing of the Great Mujtahid Mirza Hasan Shirazî in Samarra.[373] However, the real concern of the British Consulate was aroused when they learned that the injured people were either British Indian subjects or those under a British protectorate.

What stimulated the British agents to investigate the matter was a petition signed by some twenty British Indian subjects residing at Samarra for the purpose of education. The tone of their letter contains zealous expressions since they claimed that they were being attacked by their Sunni counterparts. They stated that on the twelfth day of Ramadan, the holy month for all Muslims, Sunni inhabitants of the

[372] BOA Y.MTV 94/71, 25.10.1311 (30 April 1894).
[373] FO 195/1841 Document No: 210/23, (21 April 1894) From E. Mockler Colonel, British Council General at Baghdad To Sir Philip Currie, Ambassador at the Sublime Port Constantinople.

city attacked them with sticks and stones. According to their claims, the inhabitants attacked both Persian and British Indian subjects in Samarra. The students claimed that there were "higher men" who were calling the ordinary people "with a long sword" to unite a crusade and shouting "Kill the Indians men of English's state." Additionally, they claimed that previously they had been kidnapped and tortured kidnapped.[374]

The case deserves special attention since it was the higher Sunni men who were calling for "crusade" against the Shi'is. The use of the term, crusade, shows that it was a religious war and consequently served to convince the reader of the petition of the religious content of the dispute. This is baffling since crusades were historically were mounted by Christians against Muslims, not by one group of Muslims against another. There might be two possible reasons: first, the use of the term "crusade" was deliberately chosen by the petitioners to give the impression that it was really a religious matter. Second, it might have been the choice of the British scribe who translated the term "*jihad,*" holy war against infidels, as "crusade." As for the first case, the discourse of religious war, by any means, strengthens the hand of the petitioners whose innocence can be proven since they were attacked only for their beliefs. However, it is only an argument that should be considered as long as the content of the matter was fully grasped. As for the second case, it seems ambiguous that the British scribe chose to translate the term since they often used Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, or Persian terms in their reports. When the strangeness of the impression that "Kill the Indians men of English's state" is considered, it seems that Mockler directly transmitted the petition written by the British Indian subjects. Thus, the first reason comes to the fore.

[374] Ibid.

Much more important than these naive considerations on a specific term was that although the students, who were injured in the fight, claimed that it was a religious war between the followers of two denominations, their expressions reveal the fact that the target of the offending Sunnis were apparently *foreign* subjects residing in *their* town, Samarra. In addition, the call of higher men was directed not towards all the Shi'is but towards the Shi'i subjects of the British government. Therefore, as there were pre-established relations between some of the Mujtahids and the British government through certain channels, the idea of a 'foreign evil' could have been the underlying reason for the tensions.

The details gradually reached the British officials. It was understood later that the dispute, which gave birth to Samarra incident, began between a Sunni soldier and a Shi'i student over the debt of 18 Shillings (*40 Kıran*). According to the British Consul, the underlying reason was that some seven months Hasan Refik Pasha, the Vali of Baghdad, had visited Samarra and gave "ill-advised orders" for the construction of a building near a mosque.[375] Somehow, this was perceived as an offence against Mirza Hasan Shirazî, hence prepared the ground for the abovementioned atrocities. Although there is no mention of a particular construction of a building in other related documents, it was certain that the Ottoman officials were distressed, in general, by the activities of unofficial Shi'i agents residing in Samarra. As the Ottomans worried about the spread of Shi'ism, they labeled the Shi'i mujtahids, mu'mins, and akhunds as potentially unreliable and that they might collude with foreign powers for example, Britain and Iran.

The presence of the Great Mujtahid Mirza Hasan Shirazî was a significant reason to precipitate the offense. However, it was not a single action but a serious of

[375] FO 195/1841 Document No: 237/24, (5 May 1894) From E. Mockler Colonel to Sir Philip Currie.

activities organized by Shirazî following his taking up residence in Samarra. Shirazî had gained a further respect through rejecting the gifts sent to him by Nasiruddîn Shah during his visit to the Atabat in 1870. In the following years, he became the supreme Mujtahid in Iraq as well as being recognized as a higher authority among the Iranian ulema. In 1874, surprisingly, Shirazî decided to move to Samarra a city where the majority of inhabitants were Sunnis. He actively worked in Samarra, "built a seminary, a *husayniyah*, bath-houses for men and women, and even a bridge of boats over the Tigris."[376] Expectedly, his activities increased the tension with Sunnis and increased the suspicions of the Ottoman government.

Eight years ago in 1886, another incident took place in Samarra. At that time, Muhsin Khan, the Iranian Consul primarily blamed the Mufti of Samarra for inciting people against the Shi'is residing in the town.[377] Presumably, the unrest was due to the constant struggle between Ibrahim Efendi, the Mufti of Samarra, and Mirza Hasan Shirazî.[378] Despite the fact that local Ottoman agents in Iraq used an apologetic and benign language for the future of the relations between the two empires and promised the punishment of the officials who were responsible, they did not keep their promise. Moreover, the arbitrariness of the Ottoman officials over the Iranian subjects continued, for example the Mufti, Kadi, and the mayor of Samarra, were not prevented from maintaining their positions and hostility towards the Shi'i students and Shirazî. Although the Ottomans assured the Iranian authorities that the Samarra officials would be removed from office and punished for their maladministration, they did not put this into effect. In consequence, the maltreatment continued to increase.[379]

[376] Elie Kedourie, "The Iraqi Shi'is and Their Fate," 138.
[377] BOA Y.A.HUS 192/98, 25/N/1303 (26 June 1886).
[378] Çetinsaya, *The Ottoman Administration of Iraq*, 102-103.
[379] BOA Y.PRK.EŞA 5/41, 28/N/1303 (29 June 1886).

Following the Samarra incident, a petition about the incident complaining about the curses of the Mufti of Samarra was telegraphed to the Porte with 280 signatures from Shi'is whose nationality was unknown. Their petition was discussed at the *Meclîs-i Mahsûs-u Vükelâ*, but was found to be unfounded.[380] Nevertheless, the Vali took the matter seriously, and he "removed the governor of the Samarra and Kadi to Baghdad, and arrested some of the ringleaders and deputing influential officials to Samarra to investigate the matters."[381] The report stated that the Sunni inhabitants of the city had no problem with Mirza Hasan Shirazî since he was an attractive figure for the pilgrims who were bringing money to the city and sustaining its economic prosperity. However, immediately after, the relatively rapid communication channels, primarily, the telegraph lines, enabled the news to reach adjoining cities such as Kermanshah and Najaf where the Shi'is closed their shops by the order of Mirza Ceybullah, a powerful Mujtahid in Najaf, to protest against the incident.[382] Furthermore, Mujtahid Mirza Ceybullah insulted the lieutenant colonel of the district (*Kaimmakam*) resulting, soon after, his expulsion being demanded by the Porte.[383]

In the days following the Samarra incident, a memorandum, signed by the representatives of Lucknow, reached the British Consul in Baghdad and contained detailed information about the fight, between an artilleryman Hasan Ibn Receb and a Shi'i student Abdul-Hasan, a disciple of Shirazî. Soon after, the Persian Consular Agent whose house was near to the butcher shop, heard the dispute, and wanted to

[380] BOA Y.A.HUS 301/7, 21/Za/1311 (28 June 1894).
[381] FO 195/1841 Document No: 237/24, (5 May 1894) From E. Mockler Colonel, British Council General at Baghdad To Sir Philip Currie, Ambassador at the Sublime Port Constantinople
[382] Ibid.
[383] BOA Y.EE 10/69, 11/S/1312 (13 August 1894). From Muhammed Arif Bey, the Ottoman Council General at Tehran to the Sublime Porte.

arbitrate.[384] However, he was also injured by Hasan Ibn Receb then the people of Samarra attacked other Shi'i students residing in Samarra. According to the memorandum, the Rufaiyah Dervishes accelerated the fight against these Shi'i students. Shaikh Abbas, "leader of the circle of Rufaiyah Dervishes called out to the Kadi" to "fight for faith, fight for faith, kill these pigs and break your fasts o ye Muslims."[385] Furthermore, some government officials "Mahmud Nasayif, Sayyid Ali Sarraj, Hassoob, Salman son of Lataiyif, Jassim son of Ali Akbar, Mülazim (Lieutenant), Saleh Efendi of the reserve troops and Mülazim Hasan Efendi, collector of cattle taxes, mobilized the people."[386] Following the call, approximately 400 mobs gathered. They first attacked Mirza Mahmud, the Persian Naib, and some other Persians; and then plundered the house of the Naib. After that, they fought with whomever they came across from the Shi'is whether on the streets or in the bazaar. Abdul-Hasan, a disciple of the Mirza, hides a public bath. However, the mob rushed into the building but Abdul-Hasan found a way to escape and "sought asylum in the house of the Kaimmakam." Although some people threw stones at the house Abdul-Hasan, Kaimmakam did not hand Abdul-Hasan over to the mob. The angry crowded directed toward the women's bath, but were prevented by son of the Kaimmakam. The frustrated and angry crowd then marched to a school and attacked some students and during the night of the next day, they threw stones at the houses of Shi'is. On the morning of that day, according to the claims of the memorandum writers, the body of

[384] This detail corroborates with the Ottoman sources and explains why the Iranian Agent had intervened.
[385] FO 195/1841 Document No: 237/24, (28 April 1894) Memorandum of Statements made by Saiyid Hasan son of Kurban Hussein Servant at the Munafi Basni Zillah Gorgpoor and Saiyid Sadık Hussien son of Moulvie Saiyid Bakir Hussein of Lucknow and Saiyid Bakir of Lucknow.
[386] Ibid.

a student from Khorosan was found on the bank of the river. The corpse was later examined by the officials of the Ottoman infantry.[387]

Mirza Hasan Shirazî spoke to the Iraqi Shi'is to decrease the tension saying:

> Be it known to my brethren the true believers belonging to the Shia sect that I disapprove of anything happening which may cause hatred, dispute, aversion, and discord of words between Muslims and that I impose upon you the avoidance of such altogether and the assurance of sentiments of affection, love, accord and good behavior. Peace be upon you and God's mercy and blessings.[388]

Wockler argued that as long as Mirza resides in the city and attacks the pilgrims who bring prosperity, the Sunni inhabitants of the city would remain quiet. It meant that the antagonism was between small sections of society, and the Rufaiyah Dervishes had accelerated the dispute.

The Iranian government immediately received the news of the incident and perceived it as a cold-blooded insult against Mirza Hasan Shirazî and a serious threat to the Shi'i presence. The Porte asked Muhammed Arif Bey, the Ottoman Consul General at Tehran, to ensure that there was nothing about the incident to displease them. Furthermore, they tried to convince the Iranians that it was unconceivable to permit any offence against the highly esteemed Muslim Shi'i ulema by the Ottoman Caliph, the protector of all Muslims. They promised to arrest the culprits as soon as possible; and never allow any further annoying events. The Porte also transmitted the information that they had already persuaded the mujtahids to resolve the problems of the town; and showed the appreciation of Ağa Seyyid Abdullah, an important Shi'i Mujtahid in Tehran and a supporter of the pan-Islamist policies of Abdülhamid II, for the consideration of the Ottomans.[389] Afterwards, Ağa Seyyid Abdullah was given a

[387] Ibid.
[388] FO 195/1841 Document No: 281/33, (23 May 1894) From E. Wockler, the British Council General at Baghdad to Sir Philip Currie, the British Ambassador at Constantinople.
[389] BOA Y.PRK.EŞA 19/57, 25/Ş/1311 (30 April 1894). From the Sublime Porte to Muhammed Arif Bey, the Ottoman Council General at Tehran.

decoration by the Ottoman Consulate at Tehran following the consent of the Sultan and a feast was given for his honor.[390]

By the August 1894, the Samarra unrest was fully suppressed.[391] After the Ottoman troops marched into the city and the calm returned, Wockler, stated that although an unpleasant dispute had erupted in Samarra against the Shi'is, the city, where Mirza Hasan Shirazî had been residing for the past twenty-five years, it still seemed one of the best places for him to reside. In addition, the Ottoman Commander in Chief described the Samarra Incident as "a very small ailment but not treated with sufficiently strong medicine in the beginning."[392] Wockler believed that the incident was of little importance that came out of "a petty quarrel." At most, the source of the incident was "a concern for the government of the Vilayet for some time to come." He further stated, "Within Baghdad, Kahhimain, Karbala, and Najaf in a combined resident population of at least 80.000 Shi'is, no incident which stirs "en masse" in the same Vilayet so large a number of co-religionists of a peculiarly fanatical type can be called trivial."[393]

At first glance, the Samarra Incident provokes questions, such as; how could a simple dispute between two ordinary people turn into a large-scale social conflict? or, was the incident a manifestation of the deep-seated polarization and the hidden antagonism in that society? Both the Iranian and British Consuls deliberately tried to present it as an attack against all the Shi'i people living in Samarra. Furthermore,

[390] BOA Y.EE 10/69, 11/S/1312 (13 August 1894). Hereby, Muhammed Arif Bey also wanted the compensation of Mirza Hussein Khan, the Shi'i clerk of the Consulate, for his thoughtful consideration for the pan-Islamic policies of the Ottoman Empire. Mirza Hussein Khan had blamed Mujtahid Mirza Ceybullah with treason against the Shia creed for his misguidance of the people of Najaf following the Samarra Incident.

[391] FO 195/1841, (10 August 1894) E. Wockler, the British Council General at Baghdad.

[392] FO 195/1841 Document No: 242/25, (9 May 1894) From E. Wockler, the British Council General at Baghdad to Sir Philip Currie, the British Ambassador at Constantinople. Here, the word, ailment, is important because it means "an illness, especially one that does not seem serious even though it might be unpleasant or painful and last a long time." Joseph Sinclair. *Collins Co-Build English Language Dictionary*, (London: William Collins Sons & Co Ltd, 1987), p 31.

[393] FO 195/1841 Document No: 237/24, (28 April 1894).

they interpreted the event as a symbol of how the Sunni Ottomans, whether official or unofficial, perceived Shi'is and wished to treat them whenever possible. After the official reports were thoroughly examined, it is understood that the Samarra Incident was an unlawful activity executed against non-Ottoman Shi'i subjects, particularly against the Shi'i British Indian and the Shi'i Persian people. To a certain extent, it was a political maneuver and the rhetoric employed by the agencies of the British and the Persian states since they were in constant struggle with the Ottomans in order to increase their power in the region. However, to another extent, the Samarra Incident was a clue to how the organized groups, in this case, the Rufaiyah Dervishes accredited to the governmental authorities, could function in the service of the official power holders The Samarra Incident was seemingly an event between Sunni and Shi'i inhabitants of the city having nothing to do with the governmental authorities. Conversely, the incident could be considered to be, primarily, a political problem, which was encouraged both by the governmental authorities and by the accredited organized groups proceeding against 'the foreign elements' in *their* town.

A further question awaits an answer as to whether the community in Samarra was on verge of sectarian violence. In Iran, Arjomand stated, "the masses were particularly prone to incitement against the non-Muslims and religious minorities by any troublesome Molla."[394] A short review of the events discussed above shows people seemed ready to instigate. The Babis were beaten by the Sunni Muslims. In Iraq, regarding the Samarra Incident, there emerged mobs to collude with the higher Sunni ulema following their call against "the enemy," and probably not knowing both the content of the event and the aim of the attack. In Iran again, the "popular" opposition against the Vali of Meşhed by the Kiliddar of the Imam Rıza shrine, had

[394] Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, 251.

quickly instigated certain masses who colluded against Iranian government officials. Yet, these examples show that the people living in the abovementioned places were very active in dealing with political and religious matters. Saying speculatively, they should have gathered around certain identities that drawn them into mobilization thus accelerating the inter-communal disagreements and disputes.

When compared with the 1850 events in Aleppo, the Samarra Incident remains a minor issue. Following the growing influence of the European powers, the incorporation of Syria into the Capitalist circles had augmented. The existing economic and political system in Aleppo as well as in the other cities of Syria began to change dramatically and the wealth of the non-Muslim populations increased along with their status. This resulted in a deterioration of the "traditional equilibrium" and the old interdependence between Muslims and non-Muslims. In addition, in addition to their economic influence, the cultural values of the western powers were penetrating that together differentiated the non-Muslim population from the rest and antagonized the Muslims against them. Therefore, the underlying reason behind the Aleppo events was the indirect consequences of the impact of imperialism on "the traditional corporate communal bonds,"[395] whereas the major reason behind the Samarra Incident was the massive anxiety of the Ottoman officials towards any potential power brokers within their official borders that might collude with the foreign power against their authority. In this context, the Samarra Incident, far from being economic or religious conflict was primarily a diplomatic struggle between local government agencies and non-Ottoman Shi'is who were either Iranian or British subjects.

[395] Bruce Masters, "The 1850 Events in Aleppo: An Aftershock of Syria's Incorporation Into the Capitalist World System," International Journal of Middle East Studies, 22 (1990), Cambridge Univ. Press, 15-17.

CHAPTER 7

OTTOMAN OFFICIAL DISCOURSE ON SHI'ISM AND TREATMENT OF SHI'IS IN LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY IRAQ

The Ottoman perception of Iraqi Shi'is was unsteadily altered since the second half of the nineteenth century. This was both due to the transformation of the governmental mentality and to the increasing power and activities of the Shi'i ulema in the Iraqi region. The jurisprudential transformation in the Shi'i Fiqh and the structural changes in the Iraqi society through governmental cohesions and inter-communal rivalries began a process of social consolidation and homogenization. The increasing importance of the public in affecting the legitimacy structures combined with the growing religious and political activity of Shi'i scholars, endowing the Shi'i masses with a type of power synergy. Thus, the Ottoman officials perceived the dynamism of Iraqi Shi'is as a serious political threat and developed a systematic policy to prevent Shi'i activism. They chiefly favored education, instead of using forceful measures, as the most important tool of their counter-propaganda. In addition, along with the counter-propaganda, the Ottoman officials created an abusive discourse on Shi'ism, which could be realized through an analysis of the language of the official documentation. However, their treatment of Shi'is differed

from the aggressive tone of their discourse. Thus, this chapter discusses both the Ottoman official discourse on Shi'ism and the Ottoman treatment of Shi'is.

7.1 The Ottoman Official Discourse on Shi'ism

The utilization of an aggressive and abusive discourse against Shi'ism and against the Shi'i religious missionaries in Iraq came gained a special characteristic primarily after the second half of the nineteenth century. The discourse began to be used intensely since the Ottoman bureaucratic mentality changed significantly during the Hamidian regime. Until that time, the Ottoman bureaucracy considered the activities of the Iranian governments as the most serious danger threatening their authority in Iraq. As such, the incessantly dispatched reports about the spread of Shi'ism changed the official perceptions regarding the Shi'i presence in Iraq, thus acquiring a particular meaning, prompting the Shi'i Question to emerge. It was after the rise of the bureaucratic tension that the Ottoman official documentation adopted an abusive and offensive discourse concerning Shi'ism and the Shi'i missionaries in the Ottoman official documentation within the context of the nineteenth century.

Shi'is were regarded by the Ottomans "as potentially disloyal."[396] Ottoman officials thought that the degree of hatred and bigotry among Shi'is against Sunnis were high.[397] However, it should be noted that these Shi'is were primarily the non-Ottoman Shi'i subjects. The Ottoman officials blamed the Shi'i *akhunds* for their activities of "seducing and halting the thinking of people" (*Akhundlar vasıtasıyla efkâr-ı ahâli ifsâd ve ihlâl olunarak*),[398] and for planting "seeds of seduction into the minds of people" to spread Shi'ism. (*ezhân-ı umûmiyyeye bir tohum-u mefesedet*

[396] Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq 1890-1908*, 99.
[397] BOA, Y.PRK.MK. 4/80, 27/L/1306 (26 June 1889).
[398] BOA, A.MKT.UM 549/27, 22/N/1278 (22 March 1862).

bırakarak).[399] Furthermore, Ottoman official ideology deemed Shi'ism as a "heretic belief"[400] in various occasions. A report entitled Shi'ism as "*Rafizilik*"[401] meaning the heretic acts or beliefs. Shi'ism was also regarded as "superstitious belief,"[402] whereas the reception of Shi'ism was considered as *tedenni* (degradation).[403] Major Ali bin Hüseyin al-Fath, Aide-de-Camp to the Ottoman Sultan, considered the commemoration culture of Shi'is as "amongst their shameful deeds and customs and heretic demonstrations." (*Şiîlerin cümle-i âdât-ı kabîhalarından bid'at-ı şebîhler [ve] nümâyişler icrâsı*)[404]

Ahmet Yaşar Ocak has argued that, "Circles falling afoul of Sunni Islam were always with suspicion and tight control by the Ottoman political power, which had based its official ideology on Sunni Islam."[405] The central administration occasionally suppressed the circles out of the mainstream through marginalizing and officially labeling them as heretic or heterodox or as reflected in the language of the official documentation as "*râfızî*, *zındık*, *mülhid* and *hâricî*."[406] However, the application of such as an abusive discourse was dependent on the political circumstances and power relations as much as it was dependent on the predisposition of the official ideology.

As demonstrating the contextual utilization of the offensive discourse, Maurus Reinkowski has argued that the utilization of the barbarous-civilized discourse had provided a "psychological outlet and recompense" to the Ottoman administrators in expanding the official limits of Ottoman sovereignty over

[399] BOA, Y.MTV 59/41, 19/B/1309 (17 February 1892).
[400] BOA, Y.PRK.BŞK 22/62, 15/B/1308 (23 February 1891).
[401] BOA, Y.PRK.AZJ 4/49, 29/Ra/1298 (28 February 1881).
[402] BOA, Y.PRK.AZJ 17/81, 11/M/1308 (26 August 1890).
[403] BOA, Y.PRK.MYD 23/18, 1317 (1899).
[404] Ibid.
[405] Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, "Islam in the Ottoman Empire," in *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, Vol. 9 (Summer 2003), 186.
[406] Ibid, 186.

Montenegro. During the 1840s and the 1850s, the Catholic populations of the Shkodra province remained loyal to the Ottoman Empire. However, the political conditions began to change radically by the 1860s following the Leiningen Convention of 1853. The Ottoman military advance into the Montenegrin heartland was cut by European powers. Moreover, the campaign of Ottoman military forces in 1858 could not achieve successful results. Thus, the local population of Shkodra seemed likely to separate themselves from the Ottoman Empire, colluding with the European powers to achieve their independence. Henceforth, the Ottoman authorities began to label the Catholic populations of the Shkodra province as "unruly people deserving to be punished" with the terms that were reflecting the Tanzimat ideology, namely *terbiye* (educating), *inzibât* (disciplining), and *te'dîb* (punishing).[407]

Similar reflections of this ideology can also be seen in the official perception of the Ottoman authorities regarding the nomadic people in the lands of the Ottoman Empire. Mostly governed by the quest for keeping the empire politically and ideologically integrated, the Ottoman officials sponsored a politics of benign missionary activity for protecting the subjects from evil and directing them towards good. The governmental efforts were considerably reinforced by the understanding of an ordinary man being mostly ignorant and simple and having no capacity for reasoning or making judgment between good and bad. The Ottoman officials utilized such a "compassionate" yet offensive discourse when they faced a perceived danger threatening the official ideology or the symbolic sovereignty of the imperial authority. The offensive tone of the official documentation concerning the tribal and nomadic people was nearly a customary one since they were described as unyielding autonomous political entities having no will to submit the state authority. Therefore,

[407] Maurus Reinkowski, "Double Struggle, No Income," 252-53.

being tribal communities and threatening the political integrity of the empire, they were portrayed in the official documentation as people "living in a state of nomadism and savagery (*hâl-i vahşet ve bedeviyetde yaşarlar*)."[408] Thus, the main purpose of the state was to transform them into reliable members and fundamental elements of the society. Another example of this practice can be detected in the discourse of the official documentation regarding the local Syrian population, which was thought to be under the threatening influence of Protestant missionaries. It was "when Protestant missionaries became active among the Christian population of the Vilayet of Syria, the [local] people were again seen as 'simple people who can not tell good from ill and are having their believes poisoned' by evil elements" or profoundly against the Shi'i threat, they blamed the Shi'i missionaries as "perturbing the minds of the people (*tahdîş-i efkâr*)."[409]

7.2 The Ottoman Treatment of Shi'is

The Ottoman treatment of Shi'is differed from the Ottoman official discourse on Shi'ism. The foremost fear of the Ottoman officials in taking pre-emptive measures against the spread of Shi'ism was the probability of facing political problems in the near future.[410] As has been argued in previous chapters, both the perception of the spread of Shi'ism and the counter-propaganda of promoting Sunni education to check this spread were considered by the Ottoman officials as a political necessity[411] rather than being a theological obligation. It is also discernable in the Ottoman official documentation that the concern of the Ottoman officials regarding the conversions to Shi'ism emerged when changing the sectarian affiliations meant

[408] Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 40-41.
[409] Ibid, 40-41.
[410] BOA, Y.MTV. 54/82, 22/S/1309 (26 September 1891).
[411] BOA, Y.MTV. 90/76, 13/Ş/1311 (18 February 1894).

the alteration of the political loyalties and commitments to the Ottoman Sultan. In other words, reception of Shi'ism was perceived by the Ottoman officials as dangerous for maintaining the loyalties of the subjects to the state.[412] Although the Ottoman officials employed exclusively an abusive discourse on Shi'ism and the Shi'i missionaries, politically they adopted a modest manner and treated their Shi'i subjects in an accepting way. In this context, being a Shi'i Ottoman subject slightly differed from being a Sunni Ottoman; however being a Shi'i Iranian or Indian subject was quite another matter.

Despite the abusive discourse on Shi'ism in religious terms and despite the certain cases of maltreatment against Shi'is inhabiting in the Iraqi region, Ottoman authorities considered the Shi'i presence, in general, as an essential component of the regional politics. The Ottoman authorities appointed Shi'is to their administrative offices, yet, ensured that a Shi'i officer was not appointed to the governorship of a town whose inhabitants were mostly Sunnis.[413] Similarly, Ottoman authorities appointed Mehmet Bey, a Yezidi chief, to the post of m*irimiranlık* in 1892.[414] The official documentation mentions another appointment, that of Resul Efendi to the post of *Kazimiye Kaimmakamlığı*, although he was a Shi'i.[415] Moreover, the Ottoman authorities appointed Bektashis to their official posts. Ali Rıza Pasha was "a member of [the] Bektashi order, which honored the twelve Imams"[416] who was appointed as an Ottoman official. Mirza Pasha, the chief of the Yezidis, for instance, requested support from the Ottoman troops against *Küçük* Mirza, who became popular in his

[412] BOA, A.MKT.UM 549/27, 22/N/1278 (22 March 1862).
[413] BOA, Y.A.RES 30/52, 14/Z/1302 (23 September 1885).
[414] Sinan Marufoğlu, *Osmanlı Döneminde Kuzay Irak*, 170.
[415] BOA, Y.PRK.UM 43/83, 8/Ca/1316 (23 September 1898). The same document also mentions intrigues against Resul Efendi as that of being Iranian in origin and of causing disputes between Iranian and Ottoman Shi'is. However, his being a relative of late Zehad Efendi, a former mufti of Baghdad and being from the family of *Uğmâzâde*s was emphasized. Thus, the intrigues about Resul Efendi were refused and he was likely appointed to the post of *Kazimiye Kaimmakamlığı*.
[416] Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq*, 136.

resistance in the highlands and thus began to collect taxes from his co-believers. In other words, a Yezidi chief consulted to the Ottoman authorities to overthrow the rival chief in order to keep his position.[417] Therefore, the politics in the historical context of nineteenth century Iraq was functioning not on sectarian lines but rather on hegemonic power relations.

In this regard, Ottoman engagement in Shi'i mujtahids in the Iraqi region deserves special attention. Indeed, there is a two-fold tendency in the literature concerning the position of Shi'i mujtahids. One group of historians has claimed that Shi'i mujtahids in Iraq were independent actors representing the government officials as people who attempted to gain the support of these Shi'i mujtahids in order to have a free hand in establishing political control over a considerable majority of people living in Iraq. Another group of historians has claimed that mujtahids were not self-governing and autonomous actors in the region. They rather looked for the support of the Iranian Shahs or the British officials in the region to defend themselves against Ottoman oppression. Meir Litvak, for instance, agreeing with the second group argues that, "Being Shi'is under a hostile Sunni rule, the 'ulema' were often in need of Iranian and British patronage against oppressive measures imposed from Baghdad."[418] Furthermore, Litvak presumes an unyielding antagonistic relation between the Shi'i ulema and the Sunni Ottoman government of Iraq. Litvak states:

> The population and the 'ulema' in particular, did not regard the Ottoman government as legitimate and felt no alliance to it. Moreover, the 'ulema' had good reasons to fear Ottoman control over the town as it could (and in fact did) lead to restrictions on Shi'ism and the 'Ulema's freedom of action.[419]

Indeed, Shi'i mujtahids were not solely accredited to certain governmental authorities. However, they were able to build relationships with several governments.

[417] FO 195/1841, Document No: 273/32, (7 March 1894).
[418] Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq*, 118.
[419] Ibid, 138-39.

They established both official and unofficial connections with Russian, British, Ottoman, and the Iranian governments. Regardless of their political status and affiliations, mujtahids were among the primary and de facto powerful actors in the Iraqi region in the late nineteenth century. Any state policy could not be achieved without calculating their presence, intentions, and, moreover, their consent. Thus, the Ottoman, Iranian, British, and Russian governments were competing with each other, to gain the favor of these Shi'i religious notables in the Iraqi region. However, the Ottoman policy, in this regard, differed from the other governments since the Ottoman authorities did not have a consistent policy in establishing relationships with the Shi'i ulema residing in the Iraqi region. The Ottoman officials carried out a bilateral policy, that of both breaking the influence of Shi'is through promoting Sunnism and cooperating with them on local as well as international matters.

The Ottoman authorities thought that mujtahids were capable enough in persuading the Iranian Shahs to make their demands accepted through their ability to rise up the Iranian Shi'i masses in less than twenty-four hours.[420] The power of the Shi'i mujtahids led the Ottoman Sadrazam to assume that "the position of mujtahids in Usuli Shi'ism was equal to the position of Pope in Christianity or having more power than what the Pope actually exercised."[421] Ottoman officials thought that performing the ceremonies of marriage, divorce, and inheritance depended on the will and decision of the Shi'i mujtahids. Furthermore, they thought that these mujtahids had the power to abolish and legalize things as they wished. In addition, they had the right to collect the alms and *khums* (an Islamic tax meaning one-fifth of a persons' annual wealth collected by Shi'i mujtahids) to redistribute to whomever

[420] BOA, Y.PRK.AZJ 3/37 1296 (1879).
[421] BOA, Y.A.HUS 260/130 28/L/1309 (25 May 1892).

needed them from the poor to those traveling, however, at the expense of the governmental taxes.[422]

These Shi'i mujtahids were envisaged by the Ottoman authorities as independent actors having no fear of dismissal or will of appointment due to their positions of not being state officials. Instead, these mujtahids rose to power through personal fame and charisma attained before the public opinion. The Ottoman officials considered that, "People think the Shi'i mujtahids as the true representatives of the Twelfth Imam given that they are accepted the true interpreters of his words."[423] In the Ottoman official documentation, as an example of the Ottoman perception of the enormous power of the Shi'i mujtahids in the Iraqi region, the Iranian Shahs were depicted as persons visiting the Shi'i mujtahids and kissing their hands as demonstration of respect. However, the Ottoman authorities hoped that since most of the Shi'i mujtahids were Arabs subjects of the Ottoman Empire, these mujtahids would cooperate with the Ottoman government rather than with the Iranian government.[424] The Ottoman officials believed that these mujtahids would favor Ottoman rule, which was thought by the Ottomans themselves as "righteous and reasonable" when compared to Iranian rule. The government officials thought that if they could obtain the support of these mujtahids, then they would easily control Iran or intervene in its affairs. To this end, the Ottoman officials sent gifts to the tombs of the Twelve Shi'i Imams and repaired the shrines whether in the borders of the Ottoman Empire or beyond its boundaries.[425]

The rapprochement efforts to establish an Islamic unity between the Ottoman and Persian governments and among the Muslims of diverse communities and beliefs

[422] Ibid.
[423] Ibid.
[424] BOA, Y.A.HUS 260/130 28/L/1309 (25 May 1892).
[425] BOA, Y.PRK.AZJ 3/37 1296 (1879).

also provided grounds for communication between the Shi'i mujtahids and the Ottoman government.[426] Discussions among the Ottoman intellectuals concerning the applicability and the range of Pan-Islamism were thought to have included the Shi'i ulema for their success in missionary activities and ability in preaching.[427] Thus, one of the primary aims of the Pan-Islamist policy came to build up relationships with the Shi'i mujtahids.[428] The Pan-Islamic policy was successful in bringing the Shi'is and Sunnis together under the symbolic leadership of the Ottoman Sultan, for instance, during the reactions against the Italian invasion of Libya.[429] Moreover, although the British mediation of channeling large sums of money (Oudh Bequest) flowing from India to the Shi'i shrines of Najaf and Karbala could be an influential source of political hegemony in acquiring the goodwill of the Shi'i ulema, the attempts of the British government to manipulate the Shi'i ulema to rise against the Ottoman army during World War I failed.[430] In the following decades, the Ottoman government needed the political power of Islamic unity; thus, the Ottoman authorities even demanded the appointment of Shi'i scholars to Sunni medreses.[431]

The Shi'i ulema were regarded by the Ottoman authorities as nearly as equal with other notables of the Iraqi region as long as these ulema had estimable political power. Thus, the Ottoman authorities established ad hoc alliances with the Shi'i mujtahids since these mujtahids possessed an overwhelming power in regional politics. When the Ottoman Russian War of 1877-78 was going on, a disturbance at Karbala broke out. On 11 August 1877, Nixon, the British Council General at

[426] Jacob M. Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 32.
[427] Azmi Özcan, *Pan-İslamism: Osmanlı Devleti, Hindistan Müslümanları ve İngiltere (1877-1924)* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 1997), 48-49.
[428] BOA, Y.EE 38/118.
[429] Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam*, 135.
[430] Meir Litvak, "A Failed Manipulation: The British, the Oudh Bequest and the Shi'i Ulema of Najaf and Karbala," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (May, 2000), 69.
[431] BOA, DH.İD 190/28, 2/Ca/1332 (28 March 1914).

Baghdad, solicited from Sayyid Ali Bahr-al-Ulum, a Shi'i Müjtehid of Najaf, to deal with the disturbances taking place in Najaf. In his letter to the mujtahid, Nixon addressed him as his "dear friend." At about the same time, Miralay Hacı Bey, the Commandant of the Ottoman Troops, asked Sayyid Ali Bahr-al-Ulum for help in suppressing the disturbances. Indeed, the disturbance was one of the customary skirmishes occurring in rare frequencies between the two tribes of Najaf, the Zugurd and the Shumurd, or between the tribes and the Ottoman troops. Sayyid Ali Bahr-al-Ulum was depicted in the official documentation as a powerful Shi'i religious notable who was always willing to put an end to such disturbances using his best efforts. Thus, having the consent of the Ottoman authorities and the British representative, Sayyid Ali Bahr-al-Ulum intervened in the disturbances and succeeded in the submission of the rebels to Ottoman authorities.[432]

Sayyid Ali Bahr-al-Ulum solved the problem in a very traditional way, that of summoning a meeting between the ulema, elders, and the chiefs of the Hindiyya Arabs in order to establish a commission-like party to communicate with the rebels. Sayyid Ali Bahr-al-Ulum convinced the rebels, and then the events followed a usual, nearly customary, way of submission. Nixon stated:

> This [commission-like] party brought the rebels into Najaf to pray for mercy, exhibiting on their person the marks indicative of submission usual to Arabs, that is, their heads uncovered and the rope-like tie of the head led down round their necks accompanied with resentful expression and prayers for pardon. They were thus conducted to the Barracks and made to fall upon the hands and feet of their Meer Alai, and the Ulema begged pardon for them, which the Meer Alai granted and gave them leave to go. Thus, tranquility was restored to the inhabitants of the town, and thank God everything is now quiet.[433]

It seems clear that the local Ottoman government gave Sayyid Ali Bahr-al-Ulum an important role and recognized him as an intermediary between the rebels

[432] FO 195/1142, Document No: 31 (11 August 1877). J.P.Nixon,the British Council General at Baghdad.
[433] Ibid.

and the Ottoman government. Hence, the government officials recognized the Shi'i mujtahid as no different from any other religious or political notables of the town. The event is especially important for demonstrating the decisive influence of a mujtahid concerning a political dispute. Nevertheless, it is necessary to keep in mind that it was a relation built up by a local government agency that might have differed from the view of the central government. In addition, the British policy to keep the Ottoman Empire integrated during its war with Russia is beyond question. Therefore, there are two seemingly contradictory processes taking place concurrently: first, the continual struggle to decrease the power of the Shi'i religious notables; second, entering into alliances with, and cooperating with, these Shi'i religious notables.

Azmi Özcan and Cezmi Eraslan have argued that the Hamidian government adopted a lenient and consistent policy concerning the Shi'is living in the Ottoman territories.[434] However, the situation was much more complex. The Ottoman officials did not have a consistent policy to deal with the Shi'i ulema and the non-Ottoman Shi'is inhabiting the Iraqi region. They sometimes favored the Shi'i mujtahids and sometimes the Shi'i ordinary men. An example of this inconsistency can be seen in the report of Muhammed Arif Bey, Ottoman envoy to Tehran. As a precaution to the increasing power of mujtahids, Muhammad Arif Bey offered the deportation of some Shi'i mujtahids who had acted on the contrary to the interests of the Ottoman government. However, the same Muhammed Arif Bey confessed that Shi'ism would endure in Baghdad; therefore, the Ottoman government should have undertaken the responsibility of Iranian Shi'is who were thought to be potentially dangerous against the Iranian government. To this end, he suggested that when an Iranian subject consulted with the Iranian Consulate in Iraq, the local Ottoman government should

[434] Azmi Özcan, *Pan-İslamism*, 72; See also Cezmi Eraslan, *II. Abdülhamid Devrinde Osmanlı Devleti Dahilinde Afrika Kıtasında İslam Birliği*, M.A. Thesis, Istanbul University, 1985, 40-67.

retard the process. On the contrary, when an Iranian subject consulted with the local Ottoman authorities, his request should be replied as soon as possible. Thus, the Ottoman authorities anticipated to gain the favour of the Iranian subjects whose numbers were considerable in the Iraqi region and to break the influence of the Iranian government.[435] On the one hand, the Samarra incident displayed the maltreatment of non-Ottoman Shi'is, and on the other, the Pan-Islamist policies and the advice of Muhammad Arif Bey that was suggested to attract these non-Ottoman Shi'i subjects.

Contrary to the view, which drew the Shi'i mujtahids in constant struggle with the Ottoman authorities, the case of Shaykh Caferzâde Ali Efendi represents another good example. He was a Shi'i mujtahid of Najaf residing in Baghdad, presented his obedience to the Ottoman Sultan. He introduced himself as an important Shi'i mujtahid whose power was extensive in the Baghdad province. In his letter to the Sultan, he provided information about the British designs on tribes inhabiting the areas around Najaf. He believed that the solution to prevent the foreign intrigues was to provide "the unity of sects" (*tevhîd-i mezheb*) through rendering all of them Sunnis. Interestingly enough, Shaykh Caferzâde Ali was a Shi'i mujtahid but demanded the conversion of Shi'is to Sunnism. In return for his obedience to the Ottoman Sultan, the shaykh expected his grace and favor.[436] Indeed, it was the second letter of Shaykh Caferzâde Ali Effendi to the Porte. One month earlier, he had written about the land previously belonging to him that had been taken by the

[435] BOA, Y.EE 10/69, 11/S/1312 (13 August 1894).

[436] BOA, Y.MTV 66/12, 2/S/1310 (25 August 1892). He said that "the British Consulate in Baghdad Cornell Sweedy visited Najaf two or three years ago. When I felt that he had a secret agenda to incite and corrupt the tribes in Najaf, I fought against. Thus, he could not secceed and left the district. He went out of the district and stayed there in a tent for two nights. Then he moved to Deylam and gathered the tribes around him. He wanted them to write their compliants from the Ottoman government in order to find a solution." He also gave information about the barrack which the British was constructing in the Shatt-al Arab. According to him, the reason behind the attacks and looting by tribes of the Ottoman trade ships was the British intrigues.

Ottoman authorities. Then he complained about the financial deficiency in sustaining education in his *tekke* and medrese after the lands were taken from him. He asked for financial aid as to receive in the sum of 1,500 kuruş monthly. The shaykh expressed that his father had followed the same manner of submitting to submitting the Ottoman authorities. Then he asked why the lands had been taken from his possession.[437] Shaykh Caferzâde Ali Efendi was a Shi'i scholar who presented his obedience to the Ottoman Sultan and tried to get along with the Ottomans in order to regain the financial resources recently confiscated by the Ottoman government.

There are two other points, which exceed the limits of this study; however, needed to be emphasized here briefly: first, the inconsistency in the relations between the central and local governments concerning the treatment of local people; second, the tendency of the Ottoman officials to treat different unorthodox religious sects differently. The demands of the central government and the practice of the local rulers were not always in congruence with each other. When the Yezidi chiefs rebelled in around 1893, the central government favored taking lenient measures against the rebelling dissident Yezidis. Thus, the local Ottoman officials were suggested to end their surrender without bloodshed. The central government highlighted that the rebels should have been "dispersed without spilling blood, and only to resort to force if (the Ottoman troops) were fired upon." However, the commission report concerning the rebellion was scandalous informing that, "Some twenty Yezidis had presented themselves before it with the grisly evidence of seven severed heads, which they claimed had belonged to men slaughtered by Asım Bey's

[437] BOA, İrade Hus. 143, 21/M/1310 (14 August 1892). Indeed, Caferzâde claimed that his father had refused the donation of the Shah during his visit to Atabat. When it was heard by the Vali of Baghdad, he was awarded with a 25,000 kuruş gift and with the endowment of a certain amount of land.

forces."[438] In addition to this, the Ottoman authorities tended to make a differentiation between diverse non-Sunni Islamic communities. The official documentation reveals that the Ottoman authorities treated Yezidis and Shi'is differently. They were more likely to use force against the Yezidis, while unlikely to use force against the Shi'is. Shi'ism, in the views of Ottoman officials, although was a deviation from the "true" path of Islam, was still keeping the basic tenets of Islam such as the holistic unity of God, Qur'an, prophethood, and Qıble.[439]

To sum up, the Ottoman treatment of the Shi'is differed from the Ottoman official discourse on Shi'ism. On the theological level, Ottoman authorities were very adamant regarding the theoretical acceptability and justifiability of the Shi'i creed. Moreover, they generated an abusive discourse against Shi'ism and against the Shi'i missionaries in their official documentation. However, their treatment of the Shi'is was quite lenient compared to their discourse. On the level of politics, the situation was much more complex since the Ottoman authorities appointed Shi'is, Yezidis, and Bektaşis to their administrative offices at the same time as when they attempted to utilize Sunnism as an efficient tool of centralization and to run counter propaganda against diverse sectarian communities. The Shi'i presence was not regarded as dangerous for the Ottomans, yet mainly the activities of the Shi'i ulema coming from Iran were thought to be serving the interest of the Persian government.

[438] Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 74.
[439] BOA, Y.PRK.MYD 23/18, 1317 (1899).

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

The major feature regarding the socio-political history of the Middle Eastern societies was the bilateral process of the homogenization of society and of the consolidation of organized social movements followed by a process of politicization. The Tanzimat reforms' persistent policy of centralization achieved not the settlement but the dislocation of large tribal confederations. Thus, the increasing governmental pressure upon the decentralizing elements intensified the internal homogeneity of the tribal and nomadic communities. Therefore, the dominant process in the Iraqi region was the homogenization of diverse segments of society while coming under the direct control of central administrations and embracing overarching identities. The entire complexity of this process gave rise to the resurgence of religious political activism. Shi'ism, in this regard, was not an exception. The triumph of Usulism at the expense of the Akhbari interpretation of Shi'i jurisprudence through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries founded and indicated the rise of Shi'i politics. Following the triumph of Usulism, there appeared a strong tendency towards the formation of a central and functional Shi'i religious hierarchy depending on the teachings of the leading Shi'i scholars. Thus, the internal consolidation of the Shi'i hierocracy granted considerable potential to the Shi'i religious organizations and

proliferated the authority of the mujtahids over significant numbers of people. Thereafter, these masses began to be greatly influenced by the mujtahids regarding both worldly and divine affairs.

As a modern phenomenon, the influence of religion considerably increased throughout the nineteenth century. The sectarian affiliations played a significant role in shaping mostly the political relationships between state and society throughout the Middle Eastern history. Various social movements carried religious motives and incorporated large numbers of the population from both the lower and upper segments of society. The Mahdi Rising in Egypt, Babi Movement in Iran, the conversion of Oman's subjects from the Khodja Sect to Twelver Shi'ism, the Dreyfus Affair, accelerating Christian missionary activities and the Zionist Movement all shared the same historical framework with the rise of Shi'i politics in Iraq as well as the Hamidian policy of Pan-Islamism. The rise of Shi'i politics and the subsequent precaution of the Ottoman authorities contributed to the process social homogenization and consolidation. On the one hand, the increasing political activism of the Shi'i mujtahids mobilized Shi'i masses to achieve certain political ends. On the other hand, the Ottoman officials perceived the growing influence of Shi'ism as a serious political threat and carried out educational counter-propaganda of indoctrinating Sunnism to increase piety among local people. Thus, the competition between the state-sponsored Sunnism and the self-reliant Shi'ism helped to broaden the scope of religious influence as well as the governmental authority over the masses. In other words, both the Ottoman government and the Shi'i ulema attempted to increase religiosity among people who in return devoutly submitted to the higher authority, whether it be the Shi'i ulema or the Ottoman Sultan who defended.

The spread of Shi'i influence over the tribal populations in the Iraqi region had a limited impact. The Shi'i missionary actors, particularly the *akhunds*, first accredited to nomadic groups and then achieved recognition among the tribesman by way of issuing marriage contracts and fulfilling similar less important judicial functions. However, since the nomadic people were driven more by their customs and traditions than the rules of the *Sharia*, the spread achieved the nominal reception of certain Shi'i traditions and rituals. Moreover, contemporary research indicates that the tribal identities and affiliations were quite strong and continued for a considerable length of time. However, the striking feature of the penetration of Shi'ism into the tribal communities was its affect in redressing the vision of tribal politics through instilling the anti-governmental sentiments into the tribal politics. Thus, the already antagonistic relations between the tribal communities and the Ottoman government acquired a special dimension. The Shi'i political culture of protest and disobedience to any form of political authority provided the tribal populations with a consistent and systematic reason for political resistance. The increasing political power of the Shi'i mujtahids promoted and sanctioned the idea of collective sectarian resistance amongst the sedentary Shi'i population. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the Shi'i sectarian affiliations did not directly lead Shi'is into a continuous anti-governmental resistance; instead, it formed the idea of "collective resistance" around the identity of Shi'ism. In addition, the Shi'i antagonism was not directed against its Sunni brethren but primarily and concertedly against the dominant political authority of Ottoman authority and against the communal groups accredited with this political authority.

As the official defenders of competing denominations, the Ottoman and Iranian authorities had long struggled over the Iraqi region, which remained in the

sphere of influence of both governments. Thus, the Ottoman officials perceived the centuries-old Shi'i presence in the Iraqi region to be connected to the political ambitions of the Iranian governments, formulating a bureaucratic mentality of enduring conflict with Iran. The traditional perception that accepted the Shi'i presence in the Iraqi region as an implication of imperial conflict between the two sides of the Iraqi frontier began to change in the second half of the nineteenth century. Particularly the Hamidian regime represented a breakthrough in altering the traditional perception of "external threat" and the Shi'i Question emerged. The political ambitions of the Persian government were still the main motive in increasing the Ottoman apprehension; however, the attention of the Ottoman officials was drawn from an external to a mostly independent and internal threat. Both the sectarian policies and the activities of the Shi'i ulema in the Iraqi region became more precariously subjected to international politics. Accordingly, the Ottoman central government identified the Shi'i presence in the Iraqi region as a regional problem, placing it into the greater framework of the Persian Gulf politics. The religious affiliations of the subjects were among the primary reasons for constant struggles between the Ottoman and Persian Empires. Thus, Iranians were involved in the sectarian attachments of the Iraqi Shi'is whereas the Ottomans carefully monitored the circumstances relevant to the Sunni Iranian subjects.

Going back at least to the 1860s, the incessantly increasing reports on the spread of Shi'ism escalated the anxiety of the Ottoman officials. Although it was not primarily the spread of Shi'ism but mostly the increase of Shi'i sectarian influence through the agency of Shi'i mujtahids, the Ottoman authorities identified the process with the rapid spread of Shi'ism to the very segments of society however mainly inhabiting the countryside. Thus, the Ottoman officials were convinced to take

necessary measures against this spread and launched a systematic counter-propaganda campaign, whose focal point carried a peculiar characteristic, that of being pre-emptive. Although the fear of the Shi'i threat strongly existed, the Ottoman official documentation never referenced an actual Shi'i threat. It existed rather potentially and was expected in the near future. The Ottoman government adopted lenient policies in dealing with the Shi'i Question and chiefly preferred disseminating Sunni education at the expense of Shi'i propagation. The major reasons behind the implementation of educational counter-propaganda were the high degree of optimism in the transformative power of education, the conjectural political necessities of managing the customary ongoing tribal warfare, the official identification of the principal characteristic of the Shi'i threat with a potential for a future problem, and the reluctance to enforce a certain faith due to religious reasons. Nevertheless, due to the financial deficiency and the lack of educated Sunni scholars, the educational counter-propaganda faced failure even in the early phases of its implementation. Thus, the Ottoman authorities renounced this policy.

During the course of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman officials developed a two-dimensional view regarding both the Shi'ism and the Shi'is of Iraq. As for the ideological dimension, Ottoman authorities perceived Shi'ism as a theological deviation from the true path of Islam, thus a heretic belief whose followers could not be trusted anymore. In terms of the historical dimension, the Ottoman officials recognized the Shi'is of Iraq as being similar to those of other local figures who made up the Iraqi population, however, connected to the political ambitions of the Persian governments. Particularly, the Shi'is of diverse subjects inhabiting Iraq, if not unruly people acting for their own interests, were perceived by the Ottoman authorities as actors of both local and international politics. Thus, the major target of

the Ottoman officials was not the Shi'i Ottoman subjects, but the Shi'is of foreign origins, as it was the case in the Ottoman policy of reacquisition of lands in Iraq or in the Samarra Incident. Although the Ottoman authorities used exclusively an abusive discourse in their official documentation against the Shi'ism as a branch of theology, they treated Shi'is and people of other sectarian affiliations in an accepting manner. The government authorities even appointed Shi'is, Yezidis, and *Bektaşi*s to the administrative offices. Furthermore, the Ottoman officials tended to make a differentiation in treatment between Yezidis and Shi'is, and between non-Ottoman and Ottoman subjects. The Ottoman officials also established relationships with the Shi'i ulema in the Iraqi region, sometimes even accepting their role as mediators or sometimes directly colluding with them as in the case of the Pan-Islamic policy.

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